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THE

BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND,

WITH

PRECEDING AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

Long Island Historical Society.

Jno Martin Aimes MD
Martinstown
1875

VOLUME II.

THE BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND;

WITH

PRECEDING AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.:
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1869.

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THE LONG ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The Directors of the Long Island Historical Society have great pleasure in presenting to the members of that institution, and to all interested in historical research, the second volume of the Memoirs of the Society. The subject treated in it is one of peculiar and permanent interest, not only to those connected by birth or residence with Long Island, but to all students of American History. And it must be regarded as a fortunate circumstance that the collection of Documents connected with the Revolutionary movements on this Island, and the preparation of the extended and graphic Introductory Narrative which in great part is founded upon these Documents, have been committed to hands so diligent and so capable as those the result of whose labors is here presented.

It is of course not to be expected that all the views, of men and of their actions, which are set forth by Mr. Field, in his vigorous and eloquent Introduction, will command the assent of all readers of the volume. But the Directors are confident that even those who may differ from him most widely will recognize the zeal which has animated his efforts, the industry which has marked them, and the kindness of spirit, and the general good judgment, by which they have been guided. If, at any points, his conclusions in regard to the important yet sometimes obscure events which have furnished his theme should be found to be erroneous, the Documents, to which his Narrative is introductory, will probably supply the means for the proof and illustration of the fact.

The Directors rejoice to believe that, by the publication of this volume, those now living in the populous and prosperous city over whose then scarcely occupied territory the tide of battle once surged and swung, will find a fresh interest attaching hereafter to localities that have hitherto seemed commonplace, and will feel more deeply at how great a price, of heroism and of life, their present heritage of liberty and of peace was purchased for them.

Since the first volume of the Memoirs of the Society was published, in 1867, the institution, which was then just completing the fourth year of its existence, has steadily advanced, in the number of its members, in the amount of its funds, and in the extent, variety, and value of its collections.

It numbers at present 300 life members, 958 annual members, with 59 honorary and corresponding members.

Its Library has been increased by numerous additions, many of them rare and costly; and it now contains more than seventeen thousand volumes, with more than nineteen thousand unbound volumes and pamphlets. As a collection for general use, in the way of reference and consultation, it ranks already among the best in the State. It is especially rich in the departments of American History and Biography, French History, the history of Fine Art, of the Natural Sciences, and of the Science and Art of Medicine. Its range, however, is very wide, and students in almost any department of research will find something in it to reward their attention, and to assist their efforts.

To the Medical department of the Library large additions have been made, during the year past, through the liberal contributions of members of the Kings County Medical Society, and through the gift, by Mrs. De Witt C. Enos, of the large and well selected library of her deceased husband, a distinguished and lamented physician in the city.

Mrs. Maria Cary has added to our permanent funds the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars, the interest of which is to be applied to maintain and enlarge the department of American Biography, in memory of her husband, the late Mr. William H. Cary.

Original copies of the Musée Français, the Musée Royal, the Orleans Gallery, the Madrid Gallery, with many other extensive and costly illustrated works, have been added to our collections in the department of Fine Art.

The catalogue of the Library has been completed, and whatever is to be found upon our shelves is thus brought within the easy reach of any who may seek it.

Valuable contributions have at the same time been made to the Museum of the Society, of relics and memorials, specimens of natural history, paintings and curiosities; and a collection of ancient and modern coins and medals has been gathered and presented, by Mr. Charles Storrs.

The Manuscript collections of the Society have been greatly enriched in the two years past, especially by two very important additions: the first, of an extended series of letters of the Revolutionary period, covering the years 1773 to 1790; and the second, of a series of 123 original letters of Washington, written while he was residing as President at Philadelphia, and relating principally to the management of his estates during his absence from them.

The letters last named abound in curious details, illustrating the times, and the character of the writer. They had been collected by the Hon. Edward Everett, who valued them highly, and intended to annotate and publish them. After his death, they were purchased for this Society, and presented to it, by its president, Mr. James Carson Brevoort.

The collection previously mentioned had been made, and to some extent annotated, by Mr. W. Gilmore Simms, of South Carolina. It

is embraced in five large volumes, and contains a large part of the correspondence of Henry Laurens, Esq., president of the Continental Congress, and of his brilliant and accomplished son, Col. John Laurens, with many interesting letters from Richard Henry Lee, John Adams, John Jay, Generals Gates, Lincoln, and Wayne, Lord Stirling, Baron Steuben, and others. This collection was purchased from Mr. Simms, and presented to the Society, by Messrs. A. A. Low, H. E. Pierrepont, J. C. Brevoort, G. S. Stephenson, S. B. Chittenden, Henry Sheldon, F. R. Fowler, J. P. Robinson, Milan Hulbert, Charles Storrs, F. Woodruff, C. Delano Wood, James H. Prentice, Joseph Battell, Henry Sanger, Alfred S. Barnes, John C. Barnes, and Charles J. Lowrey.

It is proposed by the Directors to publish, in future volumes of the Memoirs of the Society, the more important and interesting portions of these very valuable manuscript collections.

Since the publication of the volume which preceded this, Mr. Edwards S. Sanford has added another gift, of one thousand dollars, to the two thousand dollars which he had previously given, to constitute our Publication Fund; and it is from the avails of this fund that the Directors have derived the means for the publication of the present volume, as of that which appeared before it. Those, therefore, who shall read these, with interest and advantage, will have occasion gratefully to remember the wise liberality of the founder of the Fund.

An eligible and ample building site has been secured for the Society, through the liberality of some of its members, who contributed for this purpose more than twenty thousand dollars. And it is confidently hoped that before another of the volumes in this series shall appear there will have been erected upon this site a Building, suitable and sufficient for all the uses of the institution; within which its meetings may be conveniently held, while its collection of books,

manuscripts, art-works, and memorials, shall be safely housed and attractively exhibited.

The Directors congratulate the members and friends of the Society on the progress which has thus been realized by it; and they hope that the volume which they now send forth will serve to make the aims and work of the institution more widely known, as well as in some measure to advance that delightful and quickening branch of study, for the culture of which it was established, and in aiding whose progress it is always to find its office and its reward.

Brooklyn, N. Y., *September* 1, 1869.

THE

BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND,

WITH

CONNECTED PRECEDING EVENTS, AND THE SUBSEQUENT AMERICAN RETREAT.

INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE

BY

THOMAS W. FIELD.

WITH

AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS.

BROOKLYN.
1869.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1869, by

THOMAS W. FIELD,

For the Long Island Historical Society,
In the District Court of the United States for the Southern District
of New York.

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PREFACE.

There were many events of dramatic interest occurring during the Revolutionary struggle for Independence by the thirteen United Colonies, constituting the fairest portion of the British empire in North America. This was especially the case on Long Island; where strong partisan feeling had to be encountered and resisted, in the preparations for repelling the invasion of the forces sent hither by the Mother Country. The loyalists dared much in the support of English interests; and their name was at the time rendered infamous among the ardent and finally successful advocates of the cause of Independence. Many incidents, tragical in their results, were rendered still more sad to the friends of the chief sufferers by the mystery surrounding them at the time, and by the whispered details of outrage and seizure among the hitherto quiet farms and hamlets of the Island, on the western extremity of which the first open battle of the Revolution was fought.

That battle, while one of the most remarkable and important in the war of the Revolution, has been less thoroughly understood, and less clearly described,

than many others; and even those who have carefully studied it have not always succeeded in grasping or in exhibiting those points in it which were really critical and characteristic. To present to others the aspects of the battle which were most prominently before my own mind was one principal aim which I had in view in entering on the preparation of the present volume.

Another motive which has influenced me, as I have proceeded, has been the desire to do at least a partial and tardy justice to a class of men whose earnest but defeated efforts against the Revolution have involved them ever since in what I must regard as an excessive and undue odium.

The more narrowly I have scanned the lives and sentiments of those who chose to link their fortunes with their allegiance to the King, the fainter have grown the obnoxious features with which republican zeal and traditional prejudice have usually portrayed the Tories.

I have found a self-devotion in the adherents of Royalty, that rivalled the glorious personal sacrifices of our Whig ancestors; deeds of heroism, that the patriot fathers would have gloried to emulate; refinements of education, adorning the noblest intellects; and the graces of Christianity, stimulating the loftiest fidelity to religion and honor.

A century of hate is more than enough; and there is surely now no possible danger to republican doctrines, in an unprejudiced examination of the attending and extenuating circumstances of loyalty to the Crown in 1776.

I have not been insusceptible, either, to the sentiment that it is not less praiseworthy to moderate national than individual prejudice, or to do justice to the memory of a class, than to the injured character of a person.

If I have therefore said anything to soften the asperities of national rancor, or to relieve from antipathy a class of citizens respectable for private virtues, and only obnoxious for exercising the inalienable right of political and religious opinions, I shall feel a sufficient compensation for the long hours of search and labor, which a more facile pen, and a better judgment, might have abridged.

That the narrative of warfare on Long Island might be made as complete as possible, every available source of information has been examined. The mythic details of tradition, and the meagre outlines of official documents, have been investigated and compared, to secure fidelity to historic truth. Parliamentary records, and Congressional reports, journals of Provincial assemblies and committees of safety, private letters and public documents, narra-

tives of private soldiers, and reports of general officers, histories, subsequent and contemporaneous, have all been earnestly studied, in order that every incident of value or interest might be combined into a continuous narration.

Most of these sources of information form a part of this volume, and are printed entire in its closing part.

It only remains for me to render my acknowledgments to those who truly deserve credit, for most of what may be deemed meritorious in this work. The first suggestion of it is due to Mr. Henry Onderdonk, Jr., of Jamaica, whose life has been devoted to the preservation of the incidents of partisan warfare on our Island. It is not too much to say that the work could not have been accomplished, except for the aid of his labors and research. His work, on the *Revolutionary Incidents of Long Island*, has preserved, or indicated the existence of, sufficient material to form several volumes like the present. The generosity of the earnest scholar, and the true gentleman, was never more apparent, than in the hearty satisfaction shown on seeing his own life-task merged into this present work.

I cannot permit this preface to close without expressing my surprise at the tenderness and generosity with which the Executive Committee of the Historical Society have treated what now seems to me to have

been so feeble and incomplete an exposition of the interesting subject it seeks to elucidate. How much the work owes to the Rev. Dr. R. S. Storrs, Jr., who performed the tedious service of correcting and revising the proofs, happily none but the printer and the author can ever know.

Through the attention of Mr. William L. Stone, I was able to procure from Germany an original manuscript map of the battle-ground, by a Hessian officer, which affords us some new and interesting particulars. By the photo-lithographic process this memento of that disastrous day has been perfectly reproduced, in *fac simile.*

THOMAS W. FIELD.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.
August 28, 1869.

INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE.

CHAPTER I.

Revolutionary Measures Resisted.

The influence of national and social characteristics, in promoting or retarding the progress of revolutionary sentiments, was strikingly illustrated by the events occurring on Long Island in the year 1775. The tide of emigration which had peopled the plains of Suffolk county, had flowed from the New England shores. Almost midway of the Island, it had been met by the advancing wave of population from New York, when the New England current was deflected, and passed along the northern shore of Queens county. The wave from New England reached as far as Flushing; while that from New York swept past that point, upon the southern plains, to the east of Hempstead. The turbulent and the placid streams of population never mingled, and even at this day retain the characteristics of the sources from which they sprang, or of the lands through which they flowed.

The strong impulses of the Puritan were moderated by education, and restrained by a somewhat unnatural self-control; yet his spirit was at times revealed in a fierce energy, that scorned and overleaped these artificial bonds.

On the other hand, the self-content of the descendants of the Hollander, which gave them the sensuous characteristic usually termed phlegm, easily blended with the egotistic self-appreciation of the English emigrants, which they denominated loyalty; so that both these elements of population, though animated by widely different motives, united in the desire of preserving the old government. Thus, while the towns along the northern shore readily kindled in sympathetic glow with the New England flame, those on the southern side of Queens county remained cold and impassive.

The first meeting of the citizens of that county, in response to the general sentiment of alarm which pervaded the country after the passage of the Boston Port bill, was held at the inn of Increase Carpenter, near the present village of Brushville. Marked by so important an event, as being the birth-place of the Revolution on Long Island, this inn became memorable as the scene of another tragic event, which here closed the local struggle for liberty.[1]

The descendants of a little colony of New Englanders, grouped around this spot, early felt the revolutionary fever in their veins. Meeting casually at this inn, or perhaps impelled thither by a common motive, a number of persons requested the town constable, Othniel Smith, to notify the freeholders to meet at the Court House, in Jamaica, for the purpose of taking public affairs into consideration.

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[1] This structure still remains, nearly in the same condition as at the period of these events, in the possession of a grandson of the revolutionary proprietor. It was while seeking shelter here that Gen. Woodhull fell, beneath the sabres of Delancey's troopers.

In accordance with this call, a meeting of the freeholders and inhabitants convened at the appointed place, December 6th, 1774, when a series of resolutions was agreed upon, which at the same time expressed the most fervent loyalty to the King, and the heartiest detestation and abhorrence of the oppressive acts of parliament. A committee of correspondence and observation was also appointed, whose functions were well expressed by its titles.[1]

It is evident, however, from subsequent events, as well as from the burden of some of the resolutions, that their spirit was far from being the general sentiment. Aroused by the vigorous tone of the resolves of their neighbors, which blended loyalty and rebellion in such vehement terms, one hundred and thirty-six opponents of liberal opinions signed, on the 19th of January, 1775, a statement, averring that the resolutions were expressive of the sentiments of only a small number of the citizens of Jamaica.[2]

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[1] These resolutions were published in *Gaines' Mercury* of that week, and are printed in full, with other particulars, in *Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County.*

[2] "JAMAICA, Jan. 27, 1775.— Whereas a few people in this town have taken upon themselves the name of a committee, said to be chosen by a majority of the inhabitants, we, the subscribers, freeholders, and inhabitants of the said township, do think it our duty to declare, that we never gave our consent towards choosing that committee, or making any resolves, as we utterly disapprove of all unlawful meetings, and all tyrannical proceedings whatsoever; and as we have always been, so it is our firm resolution to continue, peaceable and faithful subjects to his present majesty, King George the Third, our most gracious sovereign; and we do further declare, that we do not acknowledge any other representatives but the general assembly of this province; by whose wisdom and interposition we hope to obtain the wished redress of our grievances in a constitutional way."

This protest was signed by one hundred and thirty-six respectable inhabitants of the town, ninety-one of whom were freeholders, — the whole number of the latter in the town being estimated not to exceed one hundred and sixty.

The seeds of internecine warfare were thus sown; and the ardor of partisan zeal was certain to quicken their germination. The parties were not, however, fairly arrayed against each other until the 31st of March, the day appointed by the New York provincial committee for the election of delegates to a Convention. One hundred and sixty-nine freeholders voted, of whom ninety-four (a majority of nine), cast their votes against the election of a deputy. Thus the town of Jamaica was fairly committed in favor of the royal cause.

The people of the town of Hempstead, at the same time, left no room for doubt regarding the sentiments which prevailed there; for, on April 4th, at an assembly of the freeholders, called in pursuance of the forms of colonial law, resolutions deprecatory of all Conventions, provincial Assemblies, and Congresses, were passed without opposition. Accordingly, no attempt was made to elect delegates. The last of the series of resolutions declares: "That we are utterly averse to all mobs, riots, and illegal proceedings, by which the lives, peace, and property of our *fellow subjects* are endangered; and that we will, to the utmost of our power, support our legal magistrates in suppressing all riots, and preserving the peace of our liege sovereign." Thus unreservedly the people of Hempstead ranged themselves on the side of the crown and parliament.

The royalist proclivities of the inhabitants of the northern towns were scarcely less dominant, although the proximity to the New England shores gave greater boldness there to the revolutionary spirit. The readiness for active aggression, on the part of the inhabitants of Newtown, Flushing, and Oyster Bay, was owing also in a measure

to the absence of those wealthy and influential men, who in the southern towns represented the English squire, and by their patronage and official dignity held the more restless of the inhabitants in check. Many of the highest colonial dignitaries possessed estates in Jamaica and Hempstead, which they occupied during a large portion of the year.

More than a year subsequently we find the names of twenty-six persons, residents of Queens county, who were arrested as still holding office under the King. In this list of the proscribed we recognize the names of men eminent for qualities which have preserved their memory, while the odium of their partisanship has been forgotten. In our review of the incidents of the revolutionary era, these men, and the noble characteristics for which they were really eminent, will not be forgotten.

In December, 1774, an attempt was made at Oyster Bay to secure the attendance at a public meeting, of a sufficient number of the inhabitants to give color to the statement that a majority was favorable to revolutionary sentiments. Notwithstanding the vigorous efforts of several of the principal freeholders, requesting the assembling of the citizens at George Weeke's inn, so small a number of them appeared, who were believed to be favorable to their designs, that the managers, abashed with the evident aversion to the designs of the revolutionists, proceeded no further than to elect the town clerk, Samuel Townsend, their moderator, and adjourned to the annual town meeting.

A royal justice of the peace, whose name has not come down to us, is, however, recorded to have "exerted himself on that occasion with the prudence and firmness becoming a magistrate," by urging the impropriety and illegality

of such meetings, in so masterly a manner as to have the desired effect of preventing any business being done, till the legal day of calling town meeting, on the first Tuesday in April. During the interval, each party exerted itself to the utmost in arousing its adherents for the struggle that would ensue upon that occasion.

The royalist partisans relied upon their known preponderance of numbers; and the revolutionists strenuously endeavored to compensate for their numerical weakness by vehemence and activity. At the town meeting, the first act of the assembled citizens, in deposing their town clerk, and electing Thomas Smith moderator, was indicative of the prevailing sentiment.[1] After a determined struggle, the poll of votes was finished, and two hundred and five freeholders voted against any association with the Congress, and only forty-two had the temerity to cast their votes in its favor.

This minority of forty-two freeholders, with a subsequent addition of one other, was, however, so skilfully manipulated by some adroit politicians, that Zebulon Williams was received as the representative of the town by the provincial Congress. The trade of politician, in the development of which all the faculties of some of our fellow citizens have been so carefully educated during the present century, was at that period in its infancy. Numerous incidents, however, prove that even at that period the profession could boast of some able and adroit workmen.

Warned by the failure of their comrades in the adjoining towns, the whig leaders of Flushing avoided alarming

[1] Thomas Smith, at the previous meeting, had given token of sympathy with the whigs.

the royalists by calling a formal meeting, and seized the occasion of a funeral, which was attended by a considerable number of their partisans, to elect a town Committee of Safety.[1] So well were matters arranged by the whig managers, that a declaration was obtained from the town clerk, John Rodman, that John Talman had been chosen deputy by a large majority. The shrewd whigs did not put on record either the number of votes cast, or the majority which they claimed; indeed, their statement met with no credit even at that time. In these days, when political machinery accomplishes such gigantic results, and the finesse and management which invest a poor minority with the rights and powers of a great people, are looked upon as party capital, and reverenced as a sort of talent,—even in these days might the engineers of political schemes be envious of the tact and ability of the whig politicians of 1775. Of these, none was more able and adroit than Col. Jacob Blackwell, of Newtown.

In common with others of the whig leaders throughout the colonies, Col. Blackwell had inherited enough wealth, and acquired sufficient education, to make him restive under the stifling control of the paternal government, which offered no field for the exercise of the abilities of its colonial children. The restrained ambition, and re-

[1] "There was a funeral in this town about a fortnight ago which afforded three or four of the furious '*Sons of Liberty*' an opportunity of selecting as many out of their number who attended the funeral as would suit their purpose, which was twenty-five, one-seventh of the freeholders of the town. Twelve of these were immediately dubbed committee men; but by the authority of a single man, who is a friend to order and good government, they were constrained from entering on any business relating to their office, till the sentiments of all the freeholders were taken upon it; which when executed will certainly put an end to their political existence, as it is well known the inhabitants are generally against it."— *Rivington's Gazette.*

pressed talents of the rich and educated colonists, who despaired of having a stage upon which to exhibit the qualities they were conscious of possessing, contributed as much to awaken the discontent which led to the independence of these colonies, as all other motives.[1] The beautiful island in the East River known by his name, and many fertile acres around Hallet's cove, were a part of the patrimony inherited by Col. Blackwell.

The organization of the colonial militia, during the French and Indian wars, had brought him into such prominence that he was elected captain of a company. This, doubtless, only whetted his ambition, which found no arena for its exercise during the fifteen years interval between the French and revolutionary wars; and, accordingly, we find him first among the agitators against parliamentary control in his native town. The French war, by one of those strange sequences of events which startle us long after their occurrence, was an indispensable prelude to the Revolution of the colonies. It developed and trained many of the prominent men by whom that Revolution was incited and perfected; and we shall see that many of the actors in the later scenes on Long Island had received their inspiration from the lessons of that warfare.

Col. Blackwell's position, as commandant of the county militia, placed him at the head of the patriot movements, and his ambition and zeal preserved his leadership. To aid him in organizing the revolutionary element, his talent for political finesse, and tact in party artifice, had

[1] It was charged that the first impulse which John Hancock received towards revolutionary sentiments, was his resentment at the paternal government's neglect of his abilities.

been cultivated in the small republic of a county militia, in which the privates elected their own officers. How to elect a deputy to the provincial Congress, with such show of strength as to make it seem the act of the legally convened town electors, was a problem, too difficult for most of the revolutionary leaders; but Col. Blackwell found its solution.

He had, it is true, to deal with a population possessing hereditary affinities for republicanism, as their names, smacking strongly of puritanic origin, well indicate; and for this reason his work was easier. A meeting of the citizens of Newtown was appointed as early as December 10th, 1774; but his forces were well disciplined, and the militia, of which he was commander, were doubtless thoroughly pledged to be present, and to sustain him and his propositions. With the characteristic shrewdness and bad faith of a politician, the repudiated action of the few whig citizens of Jamaica was represented as "the series of spirited and well adapted resolves of their neighboring townsmen;" and the carefully chosen citizens who formed the assembly at Newtown were exhorted to act promptly, so as not to be outdone by their friends. Of course they determined to pass similar "spirited resolves," and adjourned for a few days, while these should be prepared.

The resolutions presented by the chairman, Col. Blackwell, at the next meeting, and doubtless prepared by him, compose one of the ablest and most compact statements of colonial grievances, which were drafted during the pre-

[1] See *Riker's Annals of Newtown*, 176.

paratory days of the revolutionary struggle.[1] It may not have been the less carefully prepared because sixty freeholders, whose names indicate their Dutch and Scotch origin, had signed and published a document vehemently protesting against the whole proceeding, and clamorously proclaiming their unfaltering loyalty.[1]

It is not probable that such an adroit and able manager would rest satisfied, however, with mere proclamations; for his military experience taught him that nothing must be left to hazard which could be provided for by discipline and management. We are not, therefore, surprised to find, that at the annual town meeting, not one of the sixty perverse loyalists cast his vote; nor that one hundred whigs voted to send Col. Jacob Blackwell as deputy to the provincial Congress. Thus the only town in the county that actually elected a delegate to the provincial Congress, was carried for the whigs by sharp management, in the success of which the real sentiment of the people had, probably, scarcely fair play.[2]

Four of the five towns had given large majorities against the revolutionary measures, and it was evident that the mass of the people was thoroughly and soundly loyal to

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[1] *Rivington's Gazette*, Jan. 12th, 1775.

[2] To those who trace his subsequent history, this estimate of Col. Blackwell's character will not appear unwarrantably severe. That he was a sincere republican is not doubted; but that he was led by ambitious motives seems probable, when we find him making his peace with Gen. Robertson for the purpose of preserving an estate which he feared might be forfeited, and enduring all the indignities and fines which were heaped upon him and his estate during the British occupancy of the Island, instead of sharing with his compatriots the dangers and discomforts of the battle-field. Chagrin, of one sort or another, springing, it is said, from pecuniary losses or disappointed ambition, did not permit him to see the glory of the disenthralled people for whom he had so arduously labored.

the crown and parliament. Such elements of discord could not long exist in a community, without exciting the warmest resentment in the minds of the respective parties; nor could it be long before indignation ripened into hatred, and the bitter malignity thus engendered became too fierce for human control.

The respectable names of Royalist or Addressor, and Whig or Associator, by which the parties were at first distinguished, degenerated into the mocking titles of Rebel and Tory; long before used in the bloody party struggles of England and Ireland. It is observable, in the history of partisan warfare, that the bandying of epithets, which have been the former distinctions of parties, transfers all the old hatred to the new antagonists. It often astonishes us to find such bitter hate, inciting to the bloodiest revenge, in feuds of recent origin; but we shall as often find that names are things, to the greatest portion of the human race, who accept an epithet as representing generations of differences. An epithet was sufficient, a century or two ago, to fire an entire sect with burning hatred of the wretch against whom some priest had hurled the title of 'heretic;' and scarcely half a century since, the harmless word 'aristocrat,' would doom the noblest or the humblest to the remorseless guillotine.

In the progress of the narration of events which preceded the Declaration of Independence, we have seen that at the period of the meeting of the provincial Convention, on April 20th, 1775, at the Exchange in the city of New York, the attitude of the residents of Queens county was exceedingly hostile to its designs. Instead of delegates, the towns sent addresses deprecating the mea-

sures which were understood to be the object of its organization. So palpable was the fact that almost the entire mass of its inhabitants entertained the strongest aversion to revolutionary sentiments, that the provincial Congress refused to the persons who assumed to act as delegates from Queens county the privilege of voting upon the measures upon which they deliberated. These delegates thus acknowledged themselves to be representatives without a constituency.

The political aspect of Kings county, occupied by a population greatly inferior in number to that of Queens, was scarcely more satisfactory to the whigs. Although the documentary evidence of the transactions of the different towns is, from various causes,[1] much less definite and satisfactory than in the adjacent counties, there is abundant ground for the belief that Kings county entered the revolutionary arena with nearly equal reluctance.

There exists some discrepancy in the dates, given by the different authorities, of the first meeting held in Kings county, for the election of delegates. It was not until May 20th, 1775, that the magistrates and freeholders of Brooklyn met for that purpose; and, although we have no means of knowing how general was the attendance, or how large was the majority in favor of the Convention, the resolutions declarative of its sentiments are sufficiently

[1] The records of the town of Brooklyn were abstracted and carried away by some of the refugee loyalists, and although returned a few years after, it was for the purpose of speculation, and the city fathers of that day neglected to replevin and recover its archives. A fate not less lamentable befell the records of the town of Bushwick. Soon after the consolidation with the city of Brooklyn, they were deposited in a movable book-case in the City Hall. The book-case was coveted by some civic functionary, who turned the precious documents upon the floor, whence the janitor transferred them to the paper mill.

decided, and expressive of revolutionary tendency. The minutes of that meeting are so characteristic of the uniform style of expression, and direction of thought, which marked the deliberations of that period, that they are transferred to these pages entire.

"At a general town meeting, regularly warned at Brooklyn, May 20th, 1775, the magistrates and freeholders met, and voted Jeremiah Remsen, Esq., into the chair, and Leffert Lefferts, Esq., clerk.

"Taking into our serious consideration the expediency and propriety of concurring with the freeholders and freemen of the *City and County of New York*, and the other colonies, townships, and precincts within this province, for holding a provincial Congress, to advise, consult, watch over, and defend, at this very alarming crisis, all our civil and religious rights, liberties and privileges, according to their collective prudence.

"After duly considering the unjust plunder, and inhuman carnage, committed on the property and persons of our brethren in the Massachusetts, who with the other New England colonies are now deemed by the mother country to be in a state of actual rebellion, by which declaration England hath put it beyond her own power to treat with New England, or to propose or receive any terms of reconciliation, until those colonies shall submit as a conquered country. The first effort to effect which was by military and naval force; the next attempt is to bring a famine among them, by depriving them of both their natural and acquired right of fishing.

"Further contemplating the very unhappy situation to which the powers at home, by oppressive measures, have

driven all the other protestant provinces, we have all evils in their power to fear, as they have already declared all the provinces aiders and abettors of rebellion; therefore,

"1st. *Resolved*, That Henry Williams, and Jeremiah Remsen, Esqrs. be now elected deputies for this township, to meet May 22, with other deputies in provincial Convention, in New York, and there to consider, determine and do, all prudential, and necessary business.

"2nd. *Resolved*, That we, confiding in the wisdom and equity of said Convention, do agree to observe all warrantable acts, associations, and orders, as said Congress shall direct. Signed, by order of the town meeting.

"LEFFERT LEFFERTS, Clerk."

The proximity of the turbulent population of New York city, even then waxing arrogant in its power, doubtless influenced the spirit of these resolutions. The leaders of the meeting, indeed, refer in explicit terms to the necessity of conforming to the example of their neighboring city, in the appointment of delegates. Thus early was a lesson enforced upon the citizens of Brooklyn, not since entirely forgotten. Another influence that urged the people of the county forward into the revolutionary torrent, was the contagious appetite for blood, which the battle of Lexington had aroused. That horrible fever of excitement which seizes a nation when the blood of its children has been shed by a foe, and which it is as impossible to escape as the contagion of a plague, like other human afflictions, is communicated with the greatest rapidity, and rages with the fiercest violence, in great cities and their vicinity.

The news of the battle of Lexington arrived in New York on the very day, April 23d, when the provincial Convention had dissolved; and the excited citizens immediately issued a call for the assembly of a provincial Congress, on the 24th of May. It was in compliance with this request that a meeting of town delegates was held at Flatbush, May 22d. Five of the six towns of Kings county, were there represented. Flatbush, by the voice of Nicholas Cowenhoven, declined any complicity in the proceedings of the Convention, but at the same time expressed the design of remaining neutral in the struggle, which was now clearly approaching. Richard Stillwell, Theodorus Polhemus, John Lefferts, Nicholas Cowenhoven, Johannes E. Lott, John Vanderbilt, Henry Williams, and Jeremiah Remsen, were the delegates chosen to represent all the towns of Kings county except Flatlands. There are many other names of prominent citizens of Kings county which have come down to us, but they are not found in the records of these meetings, or on the list of deputies to the Congress.

The fiery cross sped to the towns of Queens county, and summoned their delegates to the gathering; but these communities, more distant from the centre of revolutionary agitation, received the summons with coldness and scorn. When the address was presented to Lieut. Gov. Cadwallader Colden, at Jamaica, with a special request appended that he would intercede with Gov. Gage and the King to put an end to their violent measures, he replied evasively, but not without emotion. The keen susceptibility and fine moral sense of this accomplished gentleman made him sensitive to those influences around him, which the

heavier mould and duller comprehension of his associates could not detect; and he felt that the elements of popular commotion were not to be laughed away with a jest, or overwhelmed with silent scorn. We are left to conjecture what must have been his thoughts, as he turned away to hide an emotion which suffused his eyes with tears. A historian and scholar of eminent talents, his studies had not left him ignorant of what are the consequences of rebellion, or with what rigor kings punish their insurgent subjects.

His conscience and honor alike revolted against the crime of encouraging disloyalty, and his humanity recoiled from the dreadful punishment which he believed awaited it. That this knowledge of the spirit and sentiments of the colonists, which his long residence among them had given him, made him equally sensible of the persistency of their resentment, and the impolicy, perhaps injustice, of the parliamentary measures, is most probable. He could remember that he himself, the high civic functionary, the accomplished gentleman and scholar, had been treated like a common felon, by the insurgent mob of New York; but he could not foresee that two of his sons would be driven into exile, and another imprisoned in a loathsome jail, and left almost to perish for want of food, by the same revolutionary populace, which he saw each day arrogating to itself more and more startling authority.

The justices of Queens county signed a scornful protest against the "Anonymous advertisements" which called for meetings to appoint deputies to a Congress. From various indications it was evident that the temper of the people of Queens county had not changed, regarding the

revolutionary purposes. The crafty whig leaders were not so heedless as to overlook these unfavorable signs, and they determined to avoid by political cunning the disagreeable necessity of allowing the great majority of citizens adverse to them, to vote on the question. Instead, therefore, of taking the vote at regularly organized town meetings, they issued a call for a meeting of freeholders at Jamaica, who elected the delegates, as nearly unanimously as party caucuses are wont to do. The assembled freeholders of that town generously elected delegates to represent the town of Hempstead also, in spite of the fact that three gentlemen from that place delivered a message from its freeholders, that they had held a meeting a few days previously and resolved to have nothing to do with their Conventions or Congresses. This, it might have been supposed, would preclude the possibility of furnishing delegates for that town; but, without the slightest regard to so insignificant a circumstance, the caucus declared it to be essential that Hempstead should have its delegates, as without their election the Congress might declare the county delegates not entitled to a vote, as had already been decided in the former Convention. Accordingly Hempstead, although entirely ignorant of the favor, and certainly averse to its bestowal, was supplied with deputies to the Congress.[1] Immediately after the assembling of

[1] The placid temper of the Holland race, was not readily fired by the narration of grievances which its representatives on Long Island never felt. They looked with astonishment upon the frenzy into which their New England neighbors had lashed themselves, about a tax on Tea. They were not alone in this ignorance of their own wrongs, for the agricultural districts of most of the colonies were quietly unconscious of the brewing storm, or regarded its tokens with an indifference blended with a feeble wonder at their violence. An incident narrated by Caruthers, in his *Revolutionary*

Congress, county and town Committees of Safety were appointed in the several towns of Kings and Queens counties, in pursuance of its recommendation.

The revolutionary designs were now assuming form and dimensions, which made them as formidable as they had before appeared contemptible. From objects of scorn, the committees of shopmen and farmers began to be viewed as centres of terror and oppression; and they soon justified these apprehensions by constant espionage upon their loyalist neighbors, followed by acts of intolerance, and exclusion from the civic deliberations, which fast grew into partisan hatred. Lists were made of the proscribed, which included all who were not actively engaged in the various departments of their revolutionary organization; and day by day, those to whose education and refinement the association with the coarser elements of society was repugnant,

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Incidents of the Old North State, though grotesquely ludicrous, is suggestive of the small degree of inconvenience, which the rural colonists suffered from the measures of the parent government.

Mr. B——, who attained a high military rank during the revolutionary war, was, prior to its commencement, the proprietor of a country store in the mountains of North Carolina; and on his return from one of his annual visits to Philadelphia, bought, as a present to his wife, a pound of the famous Tea. The presence of a gentleman of high standing in the locality induced Mrs. B., to compliment him with some of the new *esculent* at his dinner. Totally ignorant of its use, she shook a generous quantity of the Chinese herb into the pot in which a ham was seething. The obstinate leaves would not, however, cook to a palatable condition, and drove the good lady almost to the verge of lunacy, when the ham, herb and all, served on the table, were pronounced uneatable. The story spread through the settlements, and an unfavorable impression regarding the merits and importance of the controversy was generally produced.

When the India Company lost its three cargoes of tea in Boston, and the prospect of war between the colonies and the mother country grew into certainty, the decision of the district was almost unanimous that the subject was too trifling for the bloody trial of war. The farmers cursed the worthless tea, and declared that parliament might tax the miserable herb as highly as it chose, for they had never seen or used it, and could suffer nothing by the heaviest duty.

as well as those whose loyalty revolted at the incipient treason, found the chains of the republican despotism drawing tighter around them. As early as June 4th, the threatening sullenness of the loyalists of Queens county had become so alarming to the provincial Congress, that it was ordered as the special subject for consideration on the next day. Nearly a month later, three of the deputies, who had neglected to take their seats, were formally warned to appear in their places, or assign reasons for the neglect. A few days after, a communication was received from Joseph French, declining to serve as deputy to the provincial Congress, because he was convinced that a majority of the freeholders of Jamaica was hostile to the measures contemplated by that body, and strongly opposed to being represented in it.

The deputy elect from Hempstead, Thomas Hicks of Little Neck, also sent in a letter of declination; but, with the characteristic reserve and caution of a quaker, he said he was compelled to that course, by the report "of *several leading men*," that the people of that town seemed much inclined to remain peaceable and quiet.

It was evident that the populous and wealthy county of Queens was in a state of such hostility to the revolutionary measures that it should be declared contumacious. Its example of loyalty to the British crown was becoming an element of danger to the whigs, which called for its suppression. It had infected, as they believed, the adjacent towns of Kings county, one at least of which already exhibited a sullen and threatening attitude.

So far, the aversion of the recusant towns to the aggressive doctrines of New England republicanism had been

confined to a gloomy scorn; but their attitude was so defiant, that the New York Congress, now thoroughly alarmed, ordered "that the members from Queens county on Tuesday next, report to this Congress their opinion on the conduct of their constituents, with regard to the controversy now subsisting between Great Britain and the American colonies, and what steps have been taken by any of the inhabitants to defend the measures necessary to be adopted by the continental, or by this Congress, for the preservation of our rights and privileges." The members from Queens county, as they were by courtesy termed, who as we have seen were deputies without a constituency, doubtless reported a statement that was deemed counter-revolutionary; for on the 28th of June, Congress decided, that "it appeared that a great number of the inhabitants of Queens county are not disposed to a representation at this board, and have dissented therefrom." It was however, ordered, "that the members from Queens county do take and hold their seats at this board, notwithstanding such dissent, and that the members of Queens who have not attended be served with a copy of the above resolution and order." This was a shrewd political stroke; and worthy of the most talented and unscrupulous popular leaders of the present day. It was not deemed so necessary to convert the people of Long Island to republicanism, as to convince the rest of the country that they were in no need of conversion.

Brooklyn and the adjacent towns were so completely overawed by the well organized democracy of the neighboring city, that their loyalist inhabitants felt that the hazard of demonstrating their position, by public acts,

was too great for experiment. Their slight inferiority of numbers, however, was amply compensated by their wealth and influence.

Few of those whose social position in Kings county entitled them, by the customs of monarchical society, to rank as gentlemen, had joined the revolutionary party, which included but a very small number of the educated men, the officials, or the possessors of considerable landed estates. The presence of these influential persons in the immediate neighborhood of the provincial Congress could not but excite the utmost uneasiness; but, as they had hitherto confined their loyalty to silent aversion, no pretext could be seized upon for annoying or coercing them. Indeed, the adherents of the crown were yet too powerful, both socially and politically, and the scarcely crystalized elements of republicanism were too feeble, for such violent measures. The time was nevertheless fast approaching when these unhappy gentlemen were to feel the strong hand of democratic tyranny, and to learn that even moderation and neutrality are not tolerated in revolutionary times.

Among those whom the whigs viewed with a distrust that was rapidly verging to hatred, were Gov. Cadwallader Colden of Jamaica, Lindley Murray of Islip, Richard Hewlett of Hempstead, and John Rapalye of Brooklyn, whose blameless lives afforded no opportunity for assault. We shall find that their moderation was not long permitted to shield them; and the story of their sufferings will exhibit to the reader how poor a defense against the popular will is such an armor.

Congress was now earnestly concentrating the scattered elements of power; the Committees of Safety throughout

the Island had thoroughly organized their system, and had become the radiating arms of the central committee which had lately assumed the title of Congress. The power of these Committees was felt at first, as we have seen, through a neighborhood espionage, that exasperated every loyalist, with what seemed to him its unwarrantable impertinence. The gentlemen of wealth felt it to be an intolerable annoyance; and the royal officers, justices, and other crown adherents, looked upon it as an illegal and unjustifiable assumption of authority, to which they submitted with the same grace which would have been accorded to a horde of banditti. The agents of recently acquired power have not in any nation or time been characterized by moderation, and amenity of manners; but when the governed, long deprived of association in the national control, seize at one grasp the reins of government, there is but a short step for the conquered between submission and hatred.

By September, the designs of the republicans had sufficiently matured to permit them to undertake more active and aggressive measures. They were now prepared to sustain such violent operations by organized force, while the loyalists had remained in sullen indolence and inactivity. On such pretexts as the ingenuity of the Committees of Safety could devise, or the impatience and annoyance of the royalists furnished, the latter were arrested, and held in durance. Early in that month Abraham Laurence, a prominent loyalist of Queens county, was arrested by the "New Levies," and confined in New York jail. Brought before a committee of Congress, sitting at Scott's tavern, in Wall street, he received

a reprimand for his conduct from these persons, upon whom he doubtless looked with some disdain as a self-constituted junta to whom he owed no allegiance. Thus made to feel that the despised hand of republican power might one day prove to be cased in mail, he was dismissed.

The Kings and Queens county militia had been organized early in 1775, and the enrolment probably included only those citizens who volunteered for the service; but a draft of all the able-bodied inhabitants had been ordered, and the numbers thus obtained were styled the New Levies. The ranks were filled with many who were far from friendly to the cause for which the forces were organized. When the combatants closed in the first deadly struggle, and the cause of liberty hung balanced in the scale of battle, the proclivities to loyalty of some, joined to the timidity of others, hastened the disasters of that bloody field.

Among the residents of Long Island who attracted the consideration of Congress, was one George Bethune, of Jamaica, who was suspected of correspondence with his Majesty's army and navy, against the liberties of America. Col. Lasher was charged with his arrest, and ordered to bring him, with his letters and papers, before the committee. The evidence was thus obtained that the loyalists contemplated hostility more serious than moody aversion; and the revolutionary authorities nerved themselves for a contest which they would gladly have avoided, less perhaps from the danger, than from the scandal of the conflict of authorities. To avoid at once the hazard of open rupture, and the confession of strong opposition to the republican authority on the Island, some device must be adopted that would cover the design of awing the royalists, at least

into acquiescence. To disarm them, without the appearance of arbitrary measures, was the first step; to deal with them afterwards would be less difficult. A resolution was therefore adopted, Sept. 16th, "that all such arms as are fit for the use of the troops raised in this colony, which shall be found in the hands of any person who has not signed the general Association, shall be impressed for the use of the troops." The arms thus seized were "to be appraised by three indifferent persons of reputation," whose certificate should entitle the proprietor to compensation or return of the weapon.[1]

This measure was well calculated to incense still further a populace already fired with vindictive feelings; but the scheme was plausibly urged as a temporary necessity, rather than an aggressive affront. The loyalists generally forbore resistance to the measure, enforced, as it was, by the presence of two companies of Col. Lasher's battalion of Long Island militia.

The work of disarming the loyalists proceeded for a few days without serious opposition, but, as we subsequently learn, with little success. On the 25th of September, however, alarming news was communicated by Abraham Skinner, regarding the threatening attitude of the people at Jamaica. He had hastened from that place with the information that the collection of arms had proceeded slowly; but in the meanwhile he had discovered that the loyalists were mustering, having himself seen numbers of them marching to the rendezvous. Apprehensive of fierce

[1] The lengthy resolutions of the provincial Congress, containing a full statement of the condition of Queens county, will be found in their journal, page 149.

resistance to the disarming force, he urged the detachment of a battalion to its assistance. This, of all measures, was the last which the Congress was solicitous to adopt; as the first clash of arms, between its forces and the sturdy loyal farmers, might arouse an angry populace, almost to a man, against them. A nucleus of resistance, thus formed, would aggregate all the elements of opposition around it, and, protected by the British vessels of war in the harbor, would soon become too formidable for the feeble forces of the revolutionists to cope with.

A gentleman, whose name was singularly associated with the subsequent history of Jamaica, was selected by Congress from its members to proceed thither, and endeavor, by more pacific arguments than loaded muskets, to dissuade the loyalists from resort to them. Egbert Benson, a delegate from Dutchess county, was the person selected. Endeared, as this gentleman is, to all students of American history, not only for his labors in behalf of the independence of our country, but for his zeal in the study of its history, we cannot but feel gratified at such testimony to his high character and eminent fitness for this mission, as his selection furnishes. Mr. Benson proceeded on his errand, but doubtless found the irritated populace too angry for argument; and, in consequence, his report is confined to the repetition of the statements of others. From Major Williams, the officer in command of the disarming detachment, and other gentlemen residents of Jamaica, he had obtained information that confirmed all which had been stated, relative to the threatening demonstrations of the loyalists; and he added, in order to prevent mistakes, that he had obtained a written communication from the com-

manding officer, which he submitted as his report. "I have endeavored in the towns of Jamaica and Hempstead to carry the resolutions of Congress into execution; but without the assistance of the battalion of Col. Lasher, I shall not be able to do it to any good purpose. The people conceal all their arms that are of any value, and many declare that they know nothing about the Congress, nor do they care anything for the orders of Congress; and say they would sooner lose their lives than give up their arms, and that they would blow any man's brains out that should attempt to take them. We find there are a number of arms that belong to the county, in the hands of the people. Some persons are so hardy and daring, as to go into the houses of those that are friendly, and take away by force those county arms that our friends have received from the clerk of the county. We are told, the people have been collecting together and parading in sundry places, armed, and firing their muskets by way of bravado. We also have it from good authority that Governor Colden yesterday sent his servant round to some of the leading people, advising them to arm and defend themselves, and not deliver their arms. In consequence of which, a number of people collected themselves this morning to retake the few arms we collected yesterday, but for some reason did not proceed. Captain Hewlett, of Hempstead, told us he had his company together last Sunday, and said, 'had your battalion appeared, we should have warmed their sides.' On the whole, had we the battalion, we believe we should be able to collect a very considerable number of good arms, and support the honor of Congress; but without it, I shall not. I think, if the battalion is sent up, the

sooner the better. Some of the leading men of Hempstead, whom we this day had together, prepared to call the town together on Monday next, and consult on the matter, and return some answer or other on Tuesday next, and seemed desirous to put off the meeting until the whole Congress met. Whether they mean by this put off to gain time to arm and prepare, or what else, we know not."

From the tenor of this report nothing was clearer, than that the slightest step toward coercion would precipitate a conflict for which Congress was poorly prepared. Nearly all the troops which the Island had furnished, were encamped at the eastern end, to resist the landing of the British, who, it was anticipated, would soon evacuate Boston. Embarrassed with the difficulties which surrounded it, and alarmed at the menacing position of the loyalists, the provincial Congress recoiled from the danger, and thus registered a confession of its weakness. Orders were at once communicated to the committee appointed, to send in all the arms secured, to collect such as were readily obtainable, and return to the city within two days.

A committee of five of the deputies was at the same time directed to proceed to the county, now deemed in a state of insurrection, and attend the meeting to be held at Hempstead on the Monday succeeding. As the committee was to reach Jamaica on Friday, orders were sent to employ the interim in using every prudent means for collecting arms. How this committee sped in its mission, we are left without information; but that it was wholly ineffective, we know from subsequent events.

Stout Richard Hewlett, of Hempstead, had been trained in a rude school that wonderfully fitted him for a partisan

officer. Queens county had furnished two hundred and ninety men for the splendid army which Abercrombie shattered against the defenses of Ticonderoga. These brave men, though sadly thinned by this appalling disaster, again rallied under their brave and enterprising Colonel Isaac Corsa of Flushing, and Major Woodhull of Mastic, and by their courage and endurance contributed greatly to the capture of Fort Frontenac by Col. Bradstreet. Capt. Hewlett commanded a company in both of these expeditions, and proved an active and daring officer. Neither the tough old partisan, nor his companion in arms, Col. Corsa, were disposed to render homage to this new government of "shop-keepers and tradesmen," as the old loyalists termed the revolutionary party. When he threatened to "warm the sides" of Major Williams's battalion, his jocular phrase had a stern humor in it, that meant heavy blows and hard fighting.

His character is well illustrated by an anecdote recorded of his subsequent career in the Revolution, when, at the head of a partisan corps, which ravaged the eastern end of the Island, he was besieged by General Parsons at Setauket. Hewlett's situation was one of imminent hazard. Two hundred and sixty men, in a feeble entrenchment, surrounded by three times their number, offered but small hopes of a successful resistance. Hewlett demanded of his soldiers if they desired to retreat. The response was a decided "No." "Then," replied the stern Colonel, "I'll stick to you as long as there is a man left." The repulse of the assaulting party, and its withdrawal from the Island, showed how much was meant by these words. The old ranger was now active in organizing his forces,

and doubtless enrolled among them many of the surviving companions of his French and Indian campaigns, who had long before seen bloody fields, and heard the angry roar of musketry and cannon. With the temper and courage of Capt. Hewlett no one was better acquainted than Major Williams; for they had been companions in arms in the French war, and had fought side by side through the forests bordering the northern lakes. They had both raised their companies on Long Island, for the campaign under Abercrombie and Bradstreet. They had fought their way together through the tangled swamps, day after day, when the woods swarmed with their savage foes; and now they met on their home soil, as mortal enemies. It was, perhaps, the knowledge of each other's qualities that made these partisan officers reluctant to test them in actual conflict.

Each party was now arming for the struggle. The Associators, who were not already in active service, enrolled themselves under a military organization, everywhere known throughout the colonies as "minute men." At Jamaica, a sufficient number of whigs associated to form a company nearly sixty strong, who elected their officers, and reported to the Congress in New York. At Great Neck, and Cow Neck, the New England influence was so strong that a large number solemnly declared their section of the township independent of the town government of Hempstead, on account of its adhesion to the crown.

Thus, on September 23d, 1775, the first declaration of independence in these colonies took place, at Cow Neck, in Queens county, by the secession of that district from the royal government of the town of Hempstead. So import-

ant was this example esteemed by Congress, to which the minutes of the meeting were transmitted, that it ordered the report to be entered at large upon the journal of the day, and passed a resolution highly commendatory of the action, which it ratified by sending commissions to the officers elected. Such were the feeble blows, which first fell upon the wedge that separated these colonies from Great Britain.

The leaders of the revolutionary party encouraged these acts of renunciation of established government, because they detached almost insensibly, thread by thread, the strong bonds which held these colonies to the crown, and prepared them for the great design. Thus, the narrow space which at first separated the Associators and the loyalists on Long Island was widening, day by day. Between them already yawned an impassable gulf, bridged at few points by the common sympathy of kindred or friendship. Even these frail connections were now parting. Throughout all the stages of preparation for the final struggle, neither party relaxed its tension for a moment. The issue of the polling of votes at Jamaica, on the 7th of November, for the election of deputies to the new Congress, sufficiently evinced this rigidity of purpose. One thousand and nine votes were cast, of which only two hundred and twenty-one were in favor of the election of deputies; while seven hundred and eighty-eight were registered against any representation in the provincial Congress. This firm exhibition of the popular disfavor of revolutionary sentiments, appalled the Congress of New York; and for two months the deputies contented themselves with fulminating their resolves against the contumacious loyalists, whose spirit and numbers made them objects of dread.

The stout Indian fighter, Captain Richard Hewlett, was storing up arms and ammunition for the contest, which his discernment warned him could not be far distant. In this he was freely aided by the grim old Governor Tryon, whose gubernatorial chair was on the quarter deck of the Asia man of war, cruising about the mouth of the harbor, or swinging at her anchor in the outer bay.[1] Not only muskets and gunpowder, but a cannon, and a ship's gunner to work it, were sent to Captain Hewlett by Gov. Tryon, to whom the stern humor of the partisan must have greatly commended him. Resolutions and proclamations against the recusants continued to be passed by the Congress, until the close of the year 1775. One of these is suggestive of much and earnest thought to the student of history. After reciting the facts which have been already narrated, and declaring the entire counties of Richmond and Queens in a state of insurrection, they ask the continental Congress to advise them how to proceed in their embarrassment. In this petition the deputies reveal the secret of their reluctance to commence coercive measures toward the loyalists of Long Island, even after the concentration of forces in the city had placed the means within their power. First, the ships of war in the harbor, which had hitherto observed a sort of

[1] On the sixth of December, 1775, Gov. Tryon wrote to the Earl of Dartmouth:

"The peaceable demeanor and loyalty of the inhabitants of Queens county, with a firm resolution to defend their families and property from insult, has drawn on them the threatened violence of Sears and his adherents. But unawed by these threats, it is believed they will be firm, united, and spirited in their resistance to such a lawless and wicked attack.

"Lieut. Gov. Colden and his family have much merit in promoting this laudable spirit of opposition to the measures of committees and congresses, in Queens county."

neutrality, would bring their guns to bear upon the city, and reduce it to a heap of ruins, the moment the severity of actual warfare was exercised towards the loyalists. Secondly, in asking Congress to employ any other than New York troops in the service of disarming the loyalists, the deputies acknowledge the little reliance they placed upon the adherence of the troops of that colony, filled as the ranks were by a draft which had swept into them loyalist and whig alike.

The petition of the provincial to the continental Congress, was acted upon without delay. The question was one of too great national importance, and the hazard of permitting the counter-revolutionary measures to culminate in resistance was too great, to admit of dalliance. A proclamation[1] was of course issued, for in parliamentary or congressional affairs, nothing can be done without proclamations; but on this occasion the continental Congress followed up their bulletin, with a regiment of armed men. Col. Heard, of Woodbridge, New Jersey, was ordered to assume command

[1] "Whereas a majority of the inhabitants of Queens county in the colony of New York, being incapable of resolving to live and die freemen, and being more disposed to quit their liberties than part with the little proportion of their property that may be necessary to defend them, have deserted the American cause, by refusing to send deputies as usual to the convention of the colony, and avowing by a public declaration an unmanly design of remaining inactive spectators of the present contest, vainly flattering themselves, perhaps, that should providence declare for our enemies they may purchase their mercy and favor at an easy rate; and on the other hand, if the war should terminate in favor of America, that then they may enjoy, without expense of blood or treasure, all the blessings resulting from that liberty which they in the day of trial had abandoned, and in defence of which many of their more virtuous neighbors and countrymen had nobly died; and although the want of public spirit observable in these men rather excites pity than alarm, there being little danger to apprehend either from their prowess or example, yet it is reasonable that those who refuse to defend their country, should be excluded from its protection and prevented from doing injury; therefore, etc."— *Proceedings Continental Congress.*

of five or six hundred minute men of that state, together with two companies of regulars from Lord Stirling's command, and proceed at once to Queens county. His orders were peremptory, to act with dispatch, secrecy, order and humanity, in disarming every person who had voted against the election of deputies. The poll list of names of the recusant electors had been forwarded to Congress, and a copy of this register now served to guide Col. Heard in the performance of his duties. Whoever refused immediate and unconditional compliance with the order, the Colonel was to place in confinement. Twenty-six names were furnished to him of prominent citizens of Queens county, who were asserted to be leaders of the disaffected; and these persons were to be secured and placed in confinement. All who, in the exercise of the natural and legal right of voting according to their own judgment and conscience, had given their names against the election of deputies, were placed under the ban of the revolutionary government, and deprived of every right and privilege which the laws could give them. Nearly eight hundred freeholders of Queens county were thus put out of protection of the law. All persons were forbidden to trade or hold intercourse with them; they were subject to arrest and imprisonment, the moment they crossed the boundary of the county; no lawyer was to defend them when accused of crime, or to prosecute any claim for debt, or suit for protection from outrage or robbery. In order to brand them with scorn, and make them as obnoxious as possible to the community, the list of seven hundred and eighty-eight voters was ordered to be published for a month in the columns of the colonial newspapers.

Every impartial mind will revolt at the severity of these measures, unprovoked as they were by any acts of violence, and only to be justified in the whigs on the ground of self-preservation. The exercise of an inalienable right, in the only manner which the consciences of many could approve, was the feeble pretext for the oppression of a whole community, by a government which based its existence on the right of every people to legislate for itself. Although the narrative of the expedition conveys the idea of unvarying success, and all the reports of its officers indicate that the submission was complete, yet barbarous acts occurred during its progress which the prudence of the officers in command concealed under general terms — acts which were the precursors of a bitter partisan warfare, that desolated the Island for seven years.

It was not until the 17th of January, that the regiment of minute men, six hundred strong, was ready to march from Woodbridge. At New York, where it arrived on the next day, the regiment was reinforced by three hundred men, mostly from Lord Stirling's division, under the command of Major De Hart. Unfortunately his detachment was joined at New York by a volunteer organization, composed of the most reckless and abandoned of her population, who had either made soldiering the last resource of a dissipated life, or who had early learned the vices of the camp. The acceptance of their services was not carrying out the plan contemplated by Congress, which had ordered the expedition to be conducted with "dispatch, secrecy, order, and humanity." The regulars, under Major De Hart, had crossed from Elizabethtown to New York, on Wednesday the 27th; but the regiment com-

manded by Col. Heard not having arrived, they encamped at Horn's Hook near Hellgate, until Friday, when the two detachments united and crossed to Long Island.

As the object of the expedition was secret, this route was chosen, to execute a flanking movement, and by appearing suddenly in the disaffected county, to give the loyalists no opportunity for collecting in force. Every step on the route from Brooklyn ferry would have passed through unfriendly territory, and fleet messengers would have warned the loyalists of the approach of the detachment. In the afternoon of the same day the expedition arrived at Newtown, and commenced the work of disarming its inhabitants.

It was late in the morning of the next day before Col. Heard and his command arrived at Jamaica, everywhere disarming the farmers whom they surprised on their route, and securing the persons of the principal loyalists, whose names they found on their list of the proscribed. While the main body marched slowly along, small parties of men were detached at every cross-road and farm-lane, who forced an entrance into the houses, and dragged from his door into the ranks every proprietor who had the misfortune to be known as a loyalist. Every house which was pointed out by the officious diligence of whig neighbors, as the residence of one who had not signed the Association, was entered and ransacked, and the warrant which licensed this violence shielded from punishment a thousand barbarities. So flagrant and scandalous were many of the outrages perpetrated by De Hart's forces that the officers of the minute men, who had doubtless been chosen agreeably to the orders of Congress as "prudent and discreet men," were shocked at their license, and longed to

be rid of their disorderly companions. The minute men of New Jersey were respectable farmers and tradesmen, heads of families in many instances; and these humane men scorned the petty plunder which the others appropriated, as much as they commiserated the distress of which they were compelled to be the authors. Large numbers of the proscribed were brought in, by the several detachments, to Jamaica; and the sabbath of January 20th, 1776, was employed in the examination and disposition of the prisoners. Every person who had committed the unpardonable crime of voting against sending deputies to Congress was seized, and required to sign an obligation not to oppose the army of Congress, or aid the ministerial troops. Those who refused to take the oath, resisted the violence of the soldiers, or declined to surrender their arms, as well as those who were designated as royalist leaders, were not permitted to escape on such easy terms, but were carried along as prisoners.

So far the detachment had nowhere met with the resistance anticipated, as the royalists hitherto had had no opportunity for mustering in force. But the object of the expedition being now thoroughly disclosed, it was apprehended that on the march to Hempstead the republicans would meet with severe opposition. Capt. Richard Hewlett, whose courage and hatred of the whig cause were well known, was expected to exercise his talent for skirmishing and Indian warfare, in harassing the march of the troops wherever a favorable position offered. There was a gathering of his partisan corps at Hempstead, where the angry loyalists were eager to avenge the outrages of their neighbors, and the invasion of their own soil. But

the disarming force too greatly outnumbered them for any hope of success, and those who could not endure the hateful submission of the oath, fled to the swamps and forests. Everywhere the march of the invading force spread dismay; and the inhabitants, abandoning all ideas of resistance, surrendered their arms and made their submission, or concealed themselves in the pathless thickets of the great bush-plains. A considerable number, to whom the oath was oppressive, or who apprehended sharp treatment, exiled themselves, rowing their boats at night through some of the narrow passages which intersected the salt marshes, and making their way to the ships in the harbor.

Two days were occupied in these operations at Jamaica, and as many at Hempstead, during which period three hundred firearms were delivered, and four hundred and seventy-one names were subscribed to the declaration of submission. Three hundred and forty-nine persons subscribed to an oath that they had neither concealed nor destroyed any arms or ammunition. Such of these as the disarming force obtained were so nearly worthless as to induce the remark from Major De Hart "that it was possible they would be worth the freight to New York, provided they were conveyed by water." It was a ready mode of cultivating the favor of the disarming officers, for the prisoners to express great irritation against those who had led them into opposition, and had deserted them in the hour of danger. This is a favorite means of defense with weak insurgents; and, although the credulity of the governmental authorities is rarely imposed upon by it, they never fail to publish it with sound of trumpets, not only to bring the insurgent leaders into contempt as cowards,

but in order to induce the popular conviction that the actual disaffection has been confined to a small number.

At Hempstead, the detachment of regulars and volunteers, under De Hart, was ordered back to New York, their outrageous conduct having become intolerable, and their aid unnecessary. Col. Heard, the commanding officer of the expedition, was admirably fitted for his ungrateful mission. While he was indefatigable in pursuit of the objects of the movement, he never forgot that his opponents were his countrymen; and, although his circumspection permitted nothing essential to escape his notice, he was humanely blind to much that a more tyrannical officer might have seized as a pretext for persecution. All who approached him were treated with civility and kindness, and, so far as lay in his power, the rigors of their imprisonment were ameliorated.[1] He was anxious to be rid of his half savage and wholly ungovernable reinforcement. Their excesses must have greatly pained him, and he accordingly seized the excuse that their services were no longer necessary.[2]

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[1] In some instances Col. Heard relaxed the severity of his orders to such an extent as to cause the delinquents to be notified of the time and place at which he would meet them, and they were permitted to remain at home until the time specified. The royalists resorted to all the devices, in which conquered but unsubdued enemies find refuge from the inquisitorial measures of the dominant power. While Col. Heard was quartered at the house of Nathaniel Sammis in Hempstead, from which village almost the whole male population had fled on his approach, one Anthony was brought before him; who escaped both imprisonment and the oath, by simulating the actions of an idiot. When asked what he knew of the Asia man of war, he replied "Asia? what kind of an animal is that;" and when ordered to remove his hat, he stood perfectly heedless of the direction until it was removed by a soldier. The form of the oath was then placed before him on the table, and he was directed to put his hand to the paper. In literal obedience he laid his broad hand upon it, when he was thrust out of the room as a fool, having fairly outwitted his captors.

[2] It is but just to record that Major De Hart attributed the disorderly conduct entirely to the volunteers, and asserted that the regulars behaved well.

As soon as he found himself unembarrassed by this band of marauders, he proceeded through the county, and reached Jericho on Thursday, with nearly seven hundred men. Scouting parties were detached to Cedar swamp, Hempstead harbor, and Flushing, while he swept his drag net through Norwich and Oyster Bay. From this wide circle he gathered, as the result of this expedition, one thousand arms, of all sorts, and nineteen of the proscribed loyalists, seven of whom, however, evaded his grasp.[1] The merits of Col. Heard, in the conduct of the expedition, were fully acknowledged by the Committee of Safety on his return to New York, and a formal vote of thanks was tendered him for his prudence in the execution of his unenviable duty.

The nineteen Long Island gentlemen who had indulged themselves in voting according to their sense of duty, or their inclination, and who had thus incurred the jealous dislike of the predominant party, were taken as prisoners to Philadelphia, where it was expected that their fate would be decided by the continental Congress. This body, however, after a detention of the unfortunate gentlemen for two weeks, was glad to be quit of them, and ordered their return to New York; thus throwing the responsibility of their final disposition upon the provincial

[1] Although the expedition had met with no open resistance and large numbers had made their submission, yet, the result was far from satisfactory. Not more than half of the disaffected, who had cast their votes against the election of deputies, had appeared before the military tribunal. Numbers of the most obnoxious had fled or secreted themselves, before the expedition reached the insurrectionary district, and it was found that a copy of the list of the proscribed had by some means been transmitted to Hempstead in advance of the arrival of Col. Heard. Most of the guns and side-arms obtained during the expedition were worthless, as the loyalists hid their best weapons.

Congress, which was requested to examine the prisoners, and report the result of their inquest to the continental body. They were accorded the privilege of occupying a house in New York, of their own selection, on the easy condition, enjoyed in common with other citizens, of paying for it from their own purse; but they were likewise compelled to pay the expenses of the guard. During the period of their detention, which terminated in ten days, the town Committees were requested to furnish evidence of their criminality; but the shrewd recusants had not been so complaisant as to commit any act that could be construed into treason against a government which they had never acknowledged. At the end of this time they were permitted to return to their homes, with the thrifty condition, which the economical authorities always attached to the privileges they granted, of paying all the expenses attending their deportation and imprisonment, and giving a bond to preserve the peace and to present themselves when summoned.[1]

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[1] An incident of the campaign is recorded in a newspaper (Jan. 20, 1776), which is illustrative of the temper of the tories, as well as of the lack of purpose and union in their resistance. "On Tuesday last, seven hundred Jersey militia, and three hundred of the Jersey regulars, entered Queens county, solely to disarm those who are opposed to American liberty; and although they (the tories) have repeatedly declared their resolution of defending their arms at the risk of their lives, yet such is the badness of their cause (which no doubt rendered them cowards), that they were disarmed without opposition; and the generality of them have sworn to abide by the measures of the Congress.

"Two young men brought seventeen prisoners into Hempstead, with their arms; and a boy of twelve years of age demanded a pair of pistols of a man who had threatened to shoot the first person that attempted to disarm him, but with fear and trembling delivered his pistols to the boy, who brought them away in triumph."

CHAPTER II.

Expeditions against the Loyalists of Queens County.

Amid the acrimony and bitterness which filled the breasts of the partisans on either side, on Long Island, it is pleasant to record the occasional exercise of gentler emotions. Many an earnest whig would not sacrifice his humanity to the dictates of party; though it was a dangerous virtue for the most pronounced of revolutionists to exhibit toward a tory. Timothy Smith, a quiet farmer of Hempstead, was styled an "inactive whig," by the Committee of Safety of the seceded district of Great Neck, and fell under their ban, because, when cited before them to give evidence against his neighbors, he forbore to come, on the pretense of urgent business. He was at once reported to Gen. Woodhull, president of the provincial Congress, as a person to be sharply dealt with. The words of his condemnation are so peculiar, in their demure suggestiveness, that they must be transcribed literally, in order to convey an idea of the social tyranny of the time: "We think him too good an evidence to escape your notice, as well as to convince him that all business must bend to the preservation of our country."

So little satisfactory was the result of Colonel Heard's expedition, that he had returned barely a month when another was contemplated. In the meanwhile the most

strenuous efforts were made to enroll all the whig residents of the Island into the militia, four regiments of which were designed to be raised, ostensibly for the defense of Long Island, but in fact to overawe and keep the loyalists in check. Letters were sent to all the leading whigs, urging them to activity in the effort; but before much had been accomplished, a more vigorous brain and a sterner will had been placed at the head of affairs in New York, to which circular letters were abominations.

Washington, aware that the British, now closely beleaguered in Boston, could hold that city only a few days longer, was turning an anxious eye to New York, whither he foresaw that they would soon remove. In a letter to Joseph Reed, dated January 31st, 1776, the Commander-in-chief says: "In my last I think I informed you of my sending General Lee to New York, with the intention of securing the tories on Long Island, and preventing, if possible, the king's troops from making a lodgment there; but I fear the Congress *will be duped by the representatives* from that government, or yield to them in such a manner as to become marplots to the expedition. The city seems to be entirely under the government of Tryon and the captain of the man of war." A short time prior to this date, Washington had written to Schuyler in complimentary terms, blended with no little severity of reflection upon the neglect of the provincial Congress of New York to treat the tories with harsher measures: "I congratulate you upon the success of your expedition into Tryon county. I hope General Lee will execute a work of the same kind on Long Island. It is high time to begin with our internal foes, when we are threatened with such severity of

chastisement from our kind parent without." To Gen. Lee he had written on the 23d: "I received your favor of the 16th instant, and am exceedingly sorry to hear that Congress countermanded the embarkation of the two regiments intended against the tories of Long Island. They, I doubt not, had their reasons; but to me it appears that the period is arrived when nothing less than the most decisive and vigorous measures should be pursued." The possession of Long Island was indispensable to the occupation of New York, and the firm loyalty of its inhabitants to the King filled his mind with apprehension.

The military experience and ardent zeal of Gen. Charles Lee gave him apparently superior fitness for the command of this important position, and he was accordingly dispatched to assume the office of military commandant of New York and Long Island. The military sagacity of this extraordinary man anticipated every movement which the enemy subsequently made. The strategic importance of Long Island was so clearly visible to his perception, quickened by great experience in the art of war, that he awaited, with an impatience which he did not attempt to conceal, the slow and cautious movements of the deliberative body, which could thwart, if it could not control him. His authority, as well as that of all the continental officers at this time, was so ill-defined, that it was hardly possible to decide where the civil power terminated and the military authority began. General Lee had scarcely arrived in New York before he decided that the entire loyalist population of Long Island must be removed, to secure the safety of New York. Sharper and more incisive measures than the provincial Congress had found nerve to perform,

would only be characteristic actions of Gen Lee, and for the performance of such he had been selected.

During the month of February a regiment of troops commanded by Col. Ward had been quartered in Brooklyn, and billeted on the farmers from Gowanus to Wallabout bay. Gen Lee had planned the line of fortifications connecting these two points, afterward so memorable in the siege of Brooklyn, and this regiment was now employed in their construction. In the journal of the provincial Congress are found many details relating to this work, which indicate his energy and zeal. These are shown by his demand, on one day, for a certain number of pots and pans, and on another, by a requisition for straw to fill the bed-sacking of sick soldiers. At length he obtained the appointment of a committee, to fix the number of articles with which the Brooklyn citizens were to furnish the soldiers of Col. Ward's regiment, at their places of billet. The Congressional archives furnish documents which exhibit on the part of those thrifty citizens more solicitude regarding their payment for these billets, "and the cribs, bed-cases, bolsters, pots, trammels, tongs, shovels, andirons, axes, candlesticks, benches, buckets, firewood, candles, straw, and house room," as specified by the Congressional resolution, than for the success of the continental arms. It is gratifying to discover that Congress allowed them seven shillings currency a week for sheltering officers under their roofs, and one shilling and sixpence for affording the same hospitality to private soldiers.

Col. Ward found many embarrassments in the progress of his work of fortifying the village of Brooklyn. The necessary brush for fascines, wood for pickets, and other

timber used in the construction of the works, could only be obtained by application to the New York Congress, which, instead of issuing peremptory orders for their seizure as necessary materials of war, sent a polite request to the farmers of Brooklyn to permit these articles to be taken from their lands, and promised that the vouchers given in receipt for them should be paid in the same manner as similar tokens of indebtedness, in the city of New York. This scrupulous and ceremonious method of preparing for the stern ordeal of the bloody battle-field was gall and wormwood to the irate Gen. Lee.

A convention had been agreed upon between Gov. Tryon, who controlled the movements of the ships of war Asia and Dutchess, and the provincial Congress, by which the latter permitted fresh meat, vegetables, and other food to be carried on board the vessels, while they forebore to bring their guns to bear upon the insurgent city. "This," said the General, "is not making war; I shall interdict it." It had been the custom to permit boats to leave the city, in every direction, and at any time, without question. Gen. Lee stationed a line of sentinels along the shore, and compelled the occupants of every boat to submit to inspection, at the risk of being detained if conveying supplies that might be useful to the enemy. The sturdy boatmen and farmers, unaccustomed to military control and impatient of its exercise, were sometimes brought back to the shore by the sharp hail of a musket ball fired over their heads. Congress, in its turn, grew restive under the sharp rule of this stern warrior, who treated its meddlesome resolutions of inquiry with a scorn that was often pungent with anger. He chafed at such restraints from these dull citizens, with a

fiery impatience, that sought some object upon which to vent its ire. Never had New York seen a commander so full of intelligent purpose, and of the energy which drives right on to its accomplishment, so beset, so hampered, and so irate.

Unfortunately for the loyalists of Long Island, Gen Lee, turning like a hunted bear upon the first object that could satiate his wrath, issued orders to seize some of the principal leaders among them; and, without a moment's delay, or the intervention of those tedious legal formalities that have been established to prove the identity of the culprit, he deported to another colony the victims of whig denunciation. One of the persons thus banished from Queens county was a gentleman named Gale, who was so fortunate as to get his case brought to the notice of Congress. This body of men, who possessed the rare merit among revolutionists of a humanity which partisanship could not chill, directed their secretary, Egbert Benson, to ascertain the circumstances of the arrest and banishment of Gale, by communicating with Gen. Lee. The latter answered, in a postscript to a long letter, that in regard to Mr. Gale, who had been arrested and conveyed into Connecticut, he agreed with the secretary that the apprehension and punishment of citizens was not his province, and that such power was only vested in the provincial Congress. But, irregular as it was, he informed the secretary that he had been assured by many respectable men that Gale was a most dangerous man, and ought not to be suffered to remain on Long Island, where an enemy was more dangerous than in any other part of America.

Amid the tokens of resentment, which appear in his letter, Gen. Lee vouchsafes the information that he has

ordered Col. Ward, then stationed at the Wallabout, to secure the whole body of tories on Long Island.[1] How far the Colonel had proceeded with these arbitrary arrests and deportations, and what number of the inhabitants of Brooklyn and the adjacent towns had been so summarily disposed of, is not known; but other names than such as appear on the journals of Congress, are found in the letters and publications of the day. The jealousy of Lee's rapid assumption of power, the humanity of the deputies, and their fear that the grim and haughty Tryon would retaliate with the long-range cannon and mortars on board the Asia and Dutchess, combined to make Congress dread the effects of the precipitate energy of the district commandant. Complaints of the severity with which the General's orders were executed, were received by the deputies from many of the most undoubted whigs on Long Island.

One of Lee's most active agents in the work of clearing the Island "of the whole body of tories," was Lieut. Col. Isaac Sears, deputy adjutant-general of the forces in New York. His activity and zeal, tinged perhaps with a little

[1] "I have this instant received your favor, relating to Mr. Gale who was apprehended and conveyed into Connecticut. I agree, sir, entirely with you, that the apprehension, trial and punishment of citizens is not my province, but that of the provincial Congress. But irregular as it was, I had the assurances of many respectable men, that he was a most dangerous man, and ought not to be suffered to remain on Long Island, where *an enemy is perhaps more dangerous than in any part of America.* However, their assurance and my opinion form no excuse, and I heartily repent that I did not refer him to you, his proper judges. I must inform you now, sir, that in consequence of the last instructions from the continental Congress, to put this city and its environs in a state of defense, I have ordered Col. Ward as a previous measure to secure the whole body of professed tories on Long Island. When the enemy is at our door, forms must be dispensed with. My duty to you, to the continental Congress, and to my own conscience, have dictated the necessity of the measure."— *Gen. Lee to the Continental Congress. Journal of Provincial Congress,* p. 343.

unscrupulousness, that enabled him to assume responsibilities which would have staggered greater men, were qualities which greatly recommended him for this service to his General. His first report to Lee indicates that the feeling with which he viewed a tory, was very like that which a cavalier of Prince Rupert's staff must have entertained for a rascally roundhead; and he entered upon the hunt of the poor loyalists, with the eager spirit of a genuine sportsman. Captain Richard Hewlett had received special attention from Gen. Lee, who had ordered Col. Sears to permit no conditions to be offered to him, but at every hazard to secure his person, and send him a prisoner to New York. Captain Hewlett's character as a hard fighter, and his eminent fitness as a partisan leader, were thoroughly appreciated by Gen. Lee, whose military experience enabled him at once to place a just estimate upon the qualities of the man, from the narration of his services in the French war.

Col. Sears arrived at Newtown on March 6th, with a company of regulars, and compelled the attendance of four of the principal loyalists, to whom he proffered the alternative of taking an oath, the terms of which had been doubtless concocted by Lee himself, or of being immediately exiled from the Island. This new oath, which he says they "swallowed as hard as if it were a four pound shot," probably included some humiliating concession, which those who had already taken the oath prescribed by the Committee of Safety, found difficult of deglutition. On the next day Col. Sears sent out his scouting parties, which beat up the country lanes and farm-houses for the capture of fugitive loyalists; but the alarm had become general, and he was able to secure only five of the proscribed

persons. These he found to be all "tories of the first rank," for the Colonel would hunt no common game; and so persuasive and concise were his arguments, exile or the oath, that they followed the example of their comrades and swallowed the latter.[1]

The tories had been so often hunted that they were now quick to take the alarm, and fly to the numerous places of concealment which they had provided. Not a few of the loyalists of Queens county were in outlying during the whole winter, so frequent and ardent was the pursuit; and it is probable that these hiding-places were rendered as comfortable as the rigor of the season would permit. Col. Sears complained, that the houses were so scattered that he found it impossible to catch many of the proscribed, without horses to pursue them; but declared, in his letter to Lee, that he should exert himself to the utmost to capture the ringleaders, and believed that he should effect it in five days. Notwithstanding his stout words, the Colonel was evidently half in despair, and wholly exasperated, by the readiness with which the intended victims eluded the pursuit. "I assure your honor," he says, "that there are a set of villains in this county, the better half of

[1] *Col. Sears to Gen. Lee.* JAMAICA, March 7th, 1776.

Sir: Yesterday I arrived at Newtown with a captain's company and tendered the oath to four of the greatest tories, which they swallowed as hard as if it was a four pound shot they were trying to get down. On this day at 11 o'clock I came here, when I sent out scouting parties, and have been able to catch but five tories, and they of the first rank, who swallowed the oath. The houses are so scattered it is impossible to catch many without horses to ride after them; but I shall exert myself to catch the greatest part of the ringleaders, and believe I shall effect it, but not in less than five days. I can assure your honor, there are a set of villains in this county, the better half of whom are waiting for support, and intend to take up arms. Nothing else will do but sending the ringleaders to a place of security.

LIEUT. COL. ISAAC SEARS, Dep. Ad. Gen.

whom are waiting for support, and intend to take up arms. Nothing else will do but sending the ringleaders to a place of security."

Col. Sears extended his march to Jamaica and Flushing, and performed the functions of his office with such severity that before the five days had expired a messenger, dispatched from the Committee of Safety for the seceded district of Great Neck, appeared at the door of Congress, and urgently demanded a hearing, on behalf of the alarmed citizens of Queens county. Daniel Whitehead Kissam, a well known member of the Great Neck Committee, on the twelfth of March, made a statement to Congress of Col. Sears' proceedings, that aroused both alarm and resentment in that body. Among the proscribed persons arrested by Col. Sears was Captain Jacob Mott, who had made his humble petition to Congress for pardon, and had been released on taking the prescribed oath. When apprehended, and carried a prisoner before Col. Sears, with natural resentment for the indignity, he refused at first to take the new oath, and presented the certificate of Congress that he had been restored by that body to good standing as a citizen; but the puissant Colonel would not deign to look at it. Captain Mott was compelled either to go into exile, and endure the restraint and degradation of a prison, or take the new oath. Having complied with the requisition, he was allowed to depart, taking a copy of the oath.

Captain Mott, and three of his neighbors who had suffered the same indignity, by publicly stating the circumstances of their re-arrest, were making more proselytes for the crown in a single day than Col. Sears and his soldiers

could apprehend in a month. The leading loyalists everywhere instilled the idea, that submission and neutrality were no safeguards, and that the promise of Congress to permit those who took the oath to live without further molestation, was illusory and insincere. The zealous Committee of Safety for Great Neck and Cow Neck were alarmed at the increasing confidence of the royalists, and the coolness of the friends of liberty, caused by the impolitic severity of Lee's agent. Perhaps a little jealousy for their newly acquired authority blended with other motives in the minds of the Committee; but, as we have seen, they lost no time in dispatching one of their number, with their earnest remonstrance, to the Congress in New York They desired to be informed by what authority Col. Isaac Sears had intruded himself with an armed force into the limits of their district, and had taken upon himself to impose a new test upon persons who had already made their composition with the constituted authorities. Mr. Kissam stated "that the people of Hempstead were much distressed, and the active committee of Great Neck and Cow Neck as greatly dissatisfied; for the opinion was gaining ground that there was no safety in adhering to Congress, and that belief was tending to convert whigs into tories."

A long debate ensued on the motion to require Col. Sears to appear before Congress, and exhibit his authority for his conduct of the expedition against the tories on Long Island. As the hand of Gen. Lee was clearly visible in the affair, the deputies were reluctant to enter upon an investigation which would surely result in an open rupture with him; but, although action upon the motion was postponed, communication was had with Col. Sears, in answer to which

he returned his letter of instructions from Gen. Lee. On the sixth of March the struggle between the provincial Congress and Gen. Lee terminated, to their mutual satisfaction doubtless, in his relief from command of the district; Lord Stirling having on that day been ordered to the post.[1]

There was at this time in the colony of New York no department of power which could, by any license of speech, be called a Government. The continental Congress at Philadelphia was slowly, by common consent, concentrating the scattered elements of authority, while the provincial Congress of New York, uncertain of the extent of its own power, experimented daily to ascertain it. Unpractised in the machinery of government, the moderate and patriotic men of which it was composed, erred both in assuming and in declining the essential responsibilities of their office. An illustration of the violent partisanship of the time, and the turbulent temper of the populace of the city, is afforded by the narration of the conduct of Christopher

[1] For the benefit of those who find pleasure in tracing in detail the troubled course of events on Long Island at this period, this characteristic letter of Gen. Lee is appended:

Lieut. Col. Isaac Sears. NEW YORK, March 5th, 1776.

Sir: As I have received information from the Commander-in-chief, that there is reason soon to expect a very considerable army of the enemy, it appears to me I should be in the highest degree culpable — I should be responsible to God, my own conscience, and the continental Congress of America — in suffering, at so dangerous a crisis, a knot of professed foes to American liberty to remain any longer within our own bosom, either to turn openly against us in arms, in conjunction with the enemy, or covertly to furnish them with intelligence, and carry on a correspondence, to the ruin of their country; I must desire you will offer a copy of this test, enclosed, to the people of whom I send you a list. Their refusal will be considered an avowal of their hostile intentions. You are therefore to secure their persons and send them up, without loss of time, as irreclaimable enemies to their country, to close custody in Connecticut. Richard Hewlett is to have no conditions offered to him, but to be secured without ceremony. CHAS. LEE, Maj. Gen.—*American Archives.*

Duyckinck, made in Congress on the 19th of February, by Comfort Sands, a native of Queens county, and one of the deputies from the city of New York.

Among the numerous revolutionary tribunals, clubs and committees, which constituted the power or dictated the course of government, was the committee of Mechanics, of New York city, whose chairman was Christopher Duyckinck. This violent and restless man, like most of those who obtain the position of leader of the populace in times of public disorder, combined the zeal of a fanatic in the revolutionary cause, with the unscrupulous purposes of a demagogue. During the recess of the New York Congress, from December 22d, 1775, to February 12th, 1776, Comfort Sands had, by its order, formed one of the Committee of Safety, to which were delegated most of the powers of that body. Non-intercourse with the recusants of Long Island had been ordered by Congress, some time previously; and so rigidly was it maintained, that not only were they prohibited from selling any of their commodities, which all other persons were forbidden to purchase, but all such goods exposed for sale were liable to seizure and confiscation.

One day a boatman, from Queens county, brought to the city a periagua loaded with wood, three-fourths of which were proven to belong to friends of Congress, and were therefore permitted by Mr. Sands to be sold. The confiscation of the remainder, belonging probably to one of his old neighbors, seemed perhaps so harsh a measure to the humane committee-man that he directed its return to the owner. The ire of Christopher Duyckinck, who, as leader of a Jacobin club, held the orders of Congress in contempt, was excited by this lenity to one of the disaf-

fected; but as the tory wood was beyond his reach, and the owner resident in a district where Duyckinck would have found it dangerous to serve a process, he determined to make reprisals upon Mr. Sands, whose humanity was so distasteful to him. As a compensation for the loss of the fuel, Duyckinck, either by personal violence, or by more prudent thieving, took possession of a watch belonging to Mr. Sands. As an excuse for this outrage, Duyckinck alleged that he had had the right to seize the contraband wood, which he claimed to be of the value of forty shillings and sixpence; and as that loss had occurred through Mr. Sands' violation of duty, he held him personally responsible for it.

Duyckinck was summoned before the provincial Congress, at its next sitting in New York, and admitted the truth of Mr. Sands' statement, justifying his conduct by the resolves of that body relating to the delinquents in Queens county, which had placed them out of the protection of the laws. The popular leader was not disposed to humble himself before Congress, and would neither return the watch, purloined from one of its members, nor admit that he had assumed unwarranted power. The Congress felt too sensibly how powerless it was to punish the audacious demagogue, with the city mob at his back, and permitted him to retire without decision on his case. It was necessary, however, for its own dignity and protection, that the matter should not be left to slumber without further notice, and in a few days the doorkeeper was directed to summon Duyckinck before the house. To exhibit his contempt and defiance of that body in the most public manner, the demagogue called in a number of his comrades as auditors of his contumelious reply to the messenger: "Tell the

Congress that I deny their authority to summon me, or to meddle in the matter, and that I will not attend upon them until they expel Sands from the house, for he is a usurper and a coward; or until they bring me with a file of musketeers." Even this insolent defiance did not sting the deputies, and arouse sufficient resentment to cause the arrest of the vaporing demagogue; for a motion requesting General Lee to take him into custody was laid on the table. The next day, however, Duyckinck was persuaded by some means to appear, and, being reprimanded for his contempt, expressed some regret for his defiance of Congress; but when civilly requested by President Woodhull to return the watch to its owner, Christopher was more reticent; he replied that he would take the matter into consideration, and retired, taking with him a copy of a resolution which had been passed, expressive of the opinion that he had acted very improperly in stealing Mr. Sands' watch.

Christopher Duyckinck paid no further attention to Congress, entertaining, as he had the undoubted right to do, a sovereign contempt for its authority. The Jacobin leader was not, however, averse to using the power of the Congress whose authority he derided, to crush a tory enemy; for the journals of the Committee of Safety record, that on the 17th of January he brought before it an unhappy loyalist, charged with the heinous crime of cursing the Congress with a heartiness which, in one of his proclivities, indicated a dangerous enmity. This was a liberty which Duyckinck reserved to himself; and the pestilent tory was laid by the heels for assuming the royal prerogative.[1]

[1] "Azor Betts was next brought before the committee, and charged by Christopher Duyckinck with having damned the Congress and committees,

The half crazed tory shopkeeper, who had been ruined by one of the military measures of Congress, admitted his disrespectful objurgations, and it was therefore

"*Resolved*, That the said Azor Betts be sent to Ulster county jail, to be there confined in close jail until the further orders of the continental or provincial Congress, or of this committee."

Kingston jail was at this time crowded with fever-stricken and famishing prisoners, and it is probable that the profane Azor Betts took his portion there as a just punishment for a contempt of Congress, which Christopher Duyckinck had proclaimed with impunity. The sagacity of the truculent chairman of the Mechanics' club did not deceive him. He prognosticated that Congress would overlook his peccadilloes, in consideration of his influence with a powerful mob, whose ferocity the deputies had reason to dread. All the ire which this had exhibited toward Gov. Cadwallader Colden and other loyalists, whose houses had been sacked, and whose persons had been outraged, in one of its paroxysms of frenzy, might at any moment be aroused against its own representatives. Not a month elapsed before Duyckinck was again on the floor of Congress, confident and bold as ever, having this time been respectfully requested instead of summoned to appear, for the purpose of allowing him to make a report of his attempt to capture some spies and tory pilots on Long Island. Duyckinck was now apparently in high

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both continental and provincial, and said that they were a lot of damned rascals, and acted only to feather their own nests, and not to serve their country; *that they had shut up his shop*, but that he hoped to see the day when he could shut them up, or overturn them."—*Jour. N. Y. Com. of Safety.*

favor with Congress, without having been compelled to feel the humiliation of acknowledging its authority when it took the liberty of differing from him in opinion. But it was impossible that two heads of the same government, both of which claimed original and supreme power, should exist without conflict; and accordingly, a month later, a charge of high misdemeanor was again preferred against him, before the representative body. Samuel Loudon, a printer, caused a memorial to be presented, relating a gross outrage which had been perpetrated upon him by this leader of the populace and his myrmidons.

A manuscript, written by a gentleman, not a resident of the city, which purported to be a review of Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, had been sent to Loudon to be printed. As it appeared to be a proper subject for publication, it was in process of composition, when an advertisement descriptive of its argument was inserted in *Gaines' Mercury*. Mr. Loudon had calculated too largely upon the common sense of the public, which had no indulgence for the printer who should set in type anything derogatory to its claim to that eminent quality; and he was therefore greatly surprised to receive a summons requiring his appearance before the Mechanics' committee. The peremptory warrant of this popular tribunal was not a document to be trifled with, like that of the provincial Congress. Whatever doubt the representative body might entertain regarding the limit of its powers, the other Congress, presided over by Christopher Duyckinck, had not a particle of uncertainty regarding the extent of its own. The syllogism by which it demonstrated its irresponsibility to a higher authority, was short, comprehensive, and exhaust-

ive. The people were the source of all power. Congress, as the mere agent of the people, possessed only such as was delegated to it. The Mechanics' committee were themselves the people, and therefore unlimited in their authority; and Christopher Duyckinck was their chairman.

Loudon was now subjected to an inquisitorial examination by the president of the revolutionary tribunal, the result of which was far from satisfactory to that dignitary, who launched the direst threats at the poor printer. To secure his property from destruction, as well as his person from violence, Loudon promised to suspend all work upon the pamphlet, and placed the keys of his premises in the hands of Duyckinck. His concessions were as vain as were the solemn assurances of the committee that he should be protected; for, two hours subsequently, at midnight, Duyckinck marshalled forty of his Pretorian guard, and entered Loudon's house, from which they carried all the impressions of the pamphlet, and burned them upon the Common. Congress, in one respect, reciprocated the scorn of Duyckinck; for, as he repudiated its action, and defied its power, the deputies concluded to have nothing further to do with him. They accordingly postponed the consideration of Loudon's memorial for a week, and never troubled themselves more upon the subject.[1]

Notwithstanding the iron rule of Gen. Lee had caused such general uneasiness, and had incited the order for his removal from the military command of Long Island, the renewed activity of the loyalists compelled the resort to

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[1] *Journal of Committee of Safety*, 405.

still sterner measures, almost immediately upon his retirement. Suspected tories were constantly found patroling, with better arms than ever, the great bush-plains, or navigating the sinuous salt-water creeks, ostensibly in pursuit of game. That they still continued to hold their secret conclaves, were organized in military bands, and met at some secret and well guarded rendezvous, in the wide tracts of scrub oak, and pine forests, which still cover more than half the Island, was evident from many circumstances. Their confident and reserved bearing, and their increasing though silent aversion to republican measures, greatly alarmed the whigs. Day by day their activity became more observable, and vastly increased the labor of the friends of Congress to counteract its effects. Lord Stirling early found the necessity of adopting energetic measures to prevent intercourse with the British ships in the harbor, to which the loyalists of the Island supplied pilots.

Soon after assuming command, he wrote to Col. Ward, who was still at the head of the forces in Brooklyn, with the assurance that his communication was made in the strictest confidence of secrecy, and directing him to permit no person to read its contents.[1] The letter contained the most explicit orders for a difficult and important service. Col. Ward was directed to detach two of his most skilful and trusted officers, each with a detachment of twenty picked men, who were to proceed to the vicinity of the Narrows upon a secret enterprise. The expedition required great adroitness, and every step was to be guarded, so as to preserve profound secrecy regarding its purpose.

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[1] *Stirling's letter to Col. Ward,* March 8th, 1776.

It was designed to capture or kill a certain resident of New Utrecht, named Frank James, whose adroitness and activity, while serving at once as a pilot and a privateer, had hitherto enabled him to evade every attempt for his seizure, while he inflicted great losses upon the whigs, by the destruction of their vessels. It was known that he often landed near his residence, where he remained during the night; but so mysterious were his movements, that he appeared at times and places where his presence was least suspected, and vanished as mysteriously as he had come. He possessed great art in contriving and carrying into effect the devices by which he decoyed vessels loaded with supplies for the troops of Congress, under the fatal guns of the Phœnix man of war, commanded by Captain Parker. Several vessels, of great importance to the Americans, had, by various crafty plans, been drawn into the trap, and had fallen almost without resistance into his hands.

Perfectly familiar with the intricacies of the harbor channels, and the numerous inlets and creeks that wind their course around the reedy islands of Jamaica bay, he was equally at home on the land or at sea, by day or night. Combining thus the functions of pilot and of spy, he had become so dangerous an enemy that every effort for his capture or destruction must be put forth. The residents of that part of Kings county which he haunted, known by Lord Stirling to be wholly in sympathy with the British, were suspected of aiding the pilot spy by enabling him to escape the toils hitherto prepared for him; and no effort was therefore to be spared, in concealing the presence of the scouting parties. Lord Stirling at the same time informed Col. Ward that other residents of that neighborhood

were believed to act as pilots and decoys, but their names were unknown to him. Their persons, however, he was assured, were well known to Mr. Christopher Duyckinck; and Col. Ward was directed to avail himself of his services, together with those of two or three guides familiar with the route of the expedition.

Since his reprimand by Gen. Woodhull, at the bar of Congress, Duyckinck's restless hatred of tories had found employment requiring all his audacity, and more than all his skill and courage. He had been commissioned to arrest or kill the daring pilot, whose piratical enterprises had long before alarmed Congress. Duyckinck, in pursuance of his design, had several nights lain in wait for James, and, on each occasion, had watched him as he came on shore, and dogged him to his haunts. The pilot, was, however, always accompanied by twenty or thirty armed British soldiers. Christopher Duyckinck was invincible at the head of a mob, when nothing more formidable than a house occupied by females was to be sacked, or a Quaker committee man was to be robbed; but he had little affection for loaded muskets, and armed soldiers he fervently abhorred. In his report to Congress, he says, that without the presence of twenty or thirty men, it will be impossible to apprehend the pilots whose persons had become familiar to him in his various reconnoissances. Duyckinck declared that while engaged in his last scouting enterprise, he had witnessed, from his hiding place, the capture of a brigantine loaded with salt, rum, and sugar, by a small craft that sailed from under the guns of the Phœnix, and that the redoubtable Frank James had gone out in the vessel which effected the capture. It was

in consequence of this information that the enterprise for the capture of these dangerous men was set on foot.

The instructions to Col. Ward were issued on the eighth of March, and upon that or the following night the expedition set out from the camp in Brooklyn. Two parties of picked men, with three days' supply of cooked rations, and twenty rounds of ammunition, having waited until near the hour of moon-rising, marched to the place of rendezvous in profound silence, under the direction of Duyckinck and his comrades, in whom they were directed to place the most implicit confidence. The march was pressed with the greatest rapidity by the detachments, in order to arrive at their stations before daylight; where they immediately separated, and scoured the shore of the bay and the creeks, to secure every boat that could be used to communicate with the British ships, by cutting holes in their bottoms with hatchets brought for the purpose. The sails and oars were then secreted, and the men themselves, before the day had dawned sufficiently for their detection, had found secure hiding places among the reeds and thickets. In these they remained for two days, sallying out at night, to scour the adjacent country and watch the suspected houses; but, notwithstanding all their vigilance, the expedition was unsuccessful. Warned by some secret signal, concerted with the numerous friends of the royal cause in New Utrecht, or protected by their good fortune, neither the daring pilot nor any of his comrades fell into the hands of the whigs.

More than a month subsequently, the bold marauder sailed the craft which was known by his own name, up the Rockaway inlet into Jamaica bay, with the design of

plundering the country market-boats, and levying tribute upon such of the whig inhabitants as he could capture. On one of the mud shoals of that wide but shallow bay, his vessel ran aground, and was soon left immovably fixed by the receding tide. A party of the American troops, by whom the shore was now constantly patroled, discovering the plight of the detested rover, succeeded by some means in bringing two field-pieces to bear upon his craft, which would in a short time have been battered to pieces. Their hopes of securing his person were, however, speedily put to rest; for, on observing the near approach of his enemies, the marauder and his crew took to their long boat, and were soon beyond the reach of cannon shot. The abandoned craft, which had aided him in the accomplishment of so much mischief, fell into the hands of his whig enemies. An examination of the armament of the captured privateer did not contribute much to the reputation for bravery of the crews of the vessels he had plundered, for it was found to consist of four painted wooden guns. A swivel gun, which formed his only offensive armament, was doubtless carried away by the crew in their flight.[1]

In the judgment of Washington it had now become a matter of the highest consequence to the success of the American arms, that Long Island should either be depopulated of its loyalist inhabitants, or be completely isolated

[1] This redoubtable pilot and privateer, Frank James, escaped all the toils of his adversaries, and entered New York with the victorious British army. On its surrender to Washington, seven years after, the wily and active loyalist concluded that he could not safely trust his person within reach of his old neighbors, with whose commodities he had taken such liberties, and he accordingly expatriated himself to Nova Scotia, where he died.

from communication with the ships of war. Instead of wholesale deportations, and new test oaths enforced upon its inhabitants, Congress adopted the plan of arming and organizing the whigs, and of keeping the disaffected districts constantly patroled by detachments, under prudent and energetic leaders. A squad of horsemen was directed by the Committee of Safety for Great Neck and Cow Neck, to patrol the beach at Rockaway; and Thomas Cornell's house was designated as their rendezvous. It will be observed that the patrol was selected from a district fifteen miles distant from its field of operations, doubtless in consequence of the fact that neither Kings nor Queens counties contained any other organization which could be relied upon. Detachments of troops were also sent to various points along the coast and beach, while armed boats were constantly rowing along Jamaica bay and the great South bay, entering their numerous inlets in the night, and lying hidden among the reeds which bordered them during the day, to intercept the craft, the crews of which constantly endeavored to hold communication with the British vessels of war in the harbor. The country people had hitherto kept the fleet well supplied, not only with fresh provisions, but with the oysters and fish which the neighboring bays afforded in exhaustless quantities. It was under color of furnishing these products of the waters, that they had been able hitherto to board the enemy's vessels in the night without detection. In these visits the disaffected were encouraged to preserve their loyalty, untarnished by association with the Congressional party; were assured of support from his Majesty's army and navy, and were

supplied with effective weapons and ammunition, in place of the worthless arms surrendered to Col. Heard.

Between these parties and the whig boat-patrols, ensued many a stirring conflict and dangerous adventure. Capt. Benjamin Birdsall, the commanding officer of the detachment which guarded the coast for seven miles east of Hempstead, had been chosen by Lord Stirling because of his special fitness for this service. It was in vain that the skill of the shrewd bay-men was exerted to delude him, for there was not a device of the sportsman, or an inlet, creek, or channel, with which he was not familiar; and his energy and celerity were fully equal to the accomplishment of his arduous duty. Captain Birdsall, up to the period of the Revolution, had been a drover-farmer, living at Jerusalem. His occupation had doubtless given him a taste for adventure, and had so toughened his frame that he had but a short apprenticeship to serve, to fit him for the trade of soldier. Besides these qualities, his constant intercourse with the sharper wits of the city traders enabled him to penetrate the ever-changing disguises of his rural neighbors, less skilled in artful devices than those with whom he was accustomed to deal. A reputation for that sharpness in trading which borders upon but never touches dishonesty, had left him in that anomalous position with regard to respectable society where the man hangs upon its skirts, scarcely admitted to its intercourse, yet without having sufficiently offended to authorize his rejection. The half respectable jockey and trader is generally tolerated in society, if he has been successful, without outraging it by scandalous offenses. Birdsall's association with the

stout butchers of the city, where revolutionary doctrines pervaded all the trading classes, had doubtless prepared him for their ready adoption; and when the time came for the separation of the town's people into loyalists and Associators, he joined the ranks of the latter.

The Committee of Safety of Queens county, had issued orders for Captains Birdsall and Nostrand to secure all the boats from Huntington to Rockaway, a distance of eighteen miles. From the seven miles of coast, which were in the district assigned to Birdsall, his activity enabled him to collect one hundred and six hay-boats, which he secured by towing a part of them up the salt creek near his house, while the remainder were dragged high up on the land, where the sun and wind speedily rendered them unserviceable. This severity of treatment, of a population which derived the largest part of its sustenance from the waters, was as unsuccessful, however, as it was impolitic and arbitrary. Unfortunately for its object, the remaining eleven miles of coast were guarded by a patrol possessed of less zeal, or more scrupulousness, than Capt. Birdsall. Nearly as many boats as had been secured by this active partisan, were, by the negligence or design of his associate officers, permitted to escape to the British fleet. It is the privilege of the conquered malcontents, in every land, to vent their repressed hatred in pasquinades and doggerel rhymes. These missiles had been hurled at Col. Heard by the exasperated but overawed loyalists; and, as every military expedition against the disaffected resulted in another string of couplets, Captain Birdsall did not escape their satire. The partisan leader repaid it a few weeks later, as will be seen in the course of our narrative, with sharper

missiles, when he hunted them as fugitives through the swamps.[1]

The severest measures of the provincial Congress did not, however, satisfy the fierce ardor of the whigs of the seceded district of Great Neck. These restless descendants of the Puritans, the first practical revolutionists in the northern states, were fired with a zeal which did not permit them to slumber over the mine they had themselves charged. Their champion and leader, Benjamin Sands, was an energetic and sleepless foe of the loyalists; and the quiet neutrality which the latter assumed did not impose upon his credulity, or satisfy his nervous patriotism. The New York Congress had issued a circular letter to the whigs of Long Island, requesting all persons, who could furnish any evidence against the nineteen loyalists who had been returned upon their hands from Philadelphia, to communicate it to President Woodhull. This was a business which Colonel Benjamin Sands set about with the keenest appetite for the employment, as it afforded him an opportunity to lay his old loyalist adversaries by the heels. His reply to the circular is exquisitely characteristic of a busy, earnest, sharp-dealing revolutionist, who is sadly annoyed that he cannot conscientiously criminate the whole batch of tories then in durance. He apologizes ingenuously for his inability to testify to the criminal loyalty of more than one of the prisoners, who happened to reside in his district. This unhappy tory

[1] Mr. Onderdonk has preserved two of these verses in his *Revolutionary Incidents:*

Ben Bircham is a committee man
The tories don't regard him;
And when he's run his sinful race
The d—l will reward him.

Ben Bircham is a committee man
Do you want to know the reason?
A bigger rogue cannot be found
To cheat when there's occasion.

gentleman, Daniel Kissam, received the full benefit of the patriotic zeal of his old neighbor, who remembered every idle expression or hasty word of resentment, wrung from a hot temper by the daily exasperations he had suffered, and who now reported all this imprudent language with the fidelity of a stenographic reporter. Each asseveration which he charges upon the unlucky tory, is fortified by the name of a witness; and if, in consequence, his Majesty's justice, Daniel Kissam, is not hanged, then circumstantiality and minuteness of eaves-dropping evidence are utterly thrown away.[1]

A few days after making his report, Sands found occasion for the exercise of his zeal in resisting the immigration of the loyalists of New England, who, routed from their homes by the potent influence of tar and feathers, and other revolutionary arguments, were seeking refuge on Long Island. The district Committee was summoned to take the matter into consideration; and a series of resolutions was accordingly adopted, which declared "that the favored section of America they inhabited, instead of being an asylum for the good and virtuous, was about to become a nest for those noxious vermin, the disaffected of other districts." It was therefore determined "that no manner of person must hereafter presume to move into the district, without a certificate signed by the chairman of the Committee of that district whence he removed, that he is friendly to the cause of his bleeding country."[2]

[1] See this curious letter, Document III.

[2] It was the zealous Col. Sands, who naively wrote to Congress that he "had cited Timothy Smith, Esq., an *inactive whig*, before him for interrogation, but that the said Smith had evaded attendance, and was in consequence suspected of being" too good evidence to be permitted to escape, and should

It was becoming more and more difficult for either the malignant tory or the conscientious loyalist to find a spot upon which to set his foot in peace. At the next meeting of his Committee, Benjamin Sands submitted a form of denunciation which was thenceforward to be launched at the heads of the disaffected who had the temerity to reside in his district. Its rigorous penalties were apparently borrowed from some ancient form of excommunication, and "enjoined all persons to break off every kind of civil, mechanical, and commercial intercourse with the deluded and obstinate person, or answer for their disobedience of this interdict at their peril."[1]

A resolution of the continental Congress, passed in March of this year, enabled the whigs of Long Island to exercise a still more rigorous severity toward the obstinate, but still non-resistant tories. The armed troops of the provincial Congress having signally failed to secure all the arms of the disaffected, the Committees of Safety were recommended to take upon themselves the task of disarming all those who would not sign the articles of Association, but they were enjoined to proceed with all prudence and moderation. The Committees of Safety on Long Island, with the fervor of zealots, eagerly accepted the powers conferred by the Congressional resolution, with but slight regard for the conditions attached. They now ordered all the inhabitants of the three counties to be enrolled in military organizations, and proceeded shortly to the extremity of compelling whig and tory alike into the ranks

be taught that he was guilty of an impertinence in allowing his own affairs to take precedence of the Committee's summons.

[1] The exact language of the form of denunciation adopted. See *Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County*, 54.

of the militia. The punishment for violation or neglect of this edict was often executed with great severity. The goods and chattels of the delinquents were seized, and sold at public auction, or sequestrated for public use. Fines for non-attendance upon the days of militia parade were levied, and the names of the absentees published, as enemies of their country. Twelve of the inhabitants of Jamaica, in a petition to the provincial Congress, gave such reasons for their non-compliance with these ordinances, as it must have sorely puzzled both that body and Benjamin Sands to refute. Their plea stated that Colonel Heard, in disarming the loyalists of Queens county, had required them to swear to live peaceably, and in no manner to engage in opposition to Congress; and in return had promised them, in its name, security from further molestation. Thus deprived of arms by one edict, they were now required by another to appear armed on parade; and although they had been assured of peaceable possession of their goods and estates, their cattle and agricultural implements had been seized by Captain Ephriam Bailey, and sold for half their value, to pay the fines levied for not engaging in a cause which they conscientiously believed to be unlawful. These vexatious fines, and humiliating denunciations, it must be recollected, were the provisional regulations of an authority no higher than that of a militia captain, who was at once legislator, judge, prosecuting attorney, and sheriff.

An instance of the exercise of these somewhat incongruous functions, so characteristically portrays the state of society that it will repay perusal. An obstinate felt maker of Cow Neck, named Wooley, had been enrolled in Capt. John Sands' company, which was mustered once a month

for military exercise, but had failed to appear in the ranks, or to give an acceptable excuse for his delinquency. Capt. Sands, having in his capacity of law-maker enacted a penalty for a misdemeanor which offended him as a military commander, and having in his high function of judge pronounced the offender guilty and sentenced him to pay such fines as seemed proper, now assumed the character of sheriff, and seized a hat alleged to be worth fifty shillings, which he sold for thirty to pay the fines. Wooley sought redress by making his complaint to a magistrate of Hempstead, but the power of that functionary of royalty had passed away. The exasperated loyalist, now half crazed by the vigorous measures of the whig captain, appeared at the next parade, and challenged him to fight with sword and pistol. His behavior was so outrageous, that it would naturally be expected that a militia captain who had recently performed such high functions, would, under such provocation, have exerted a moderate degree of power, in immediately putting the frantic tory under arrest. But Captain Sands endured his violence with the most exemplary meekness for half an hour; when, the passion of the offender having exhausted itself, and his temper having become so pacific as to strip the task of personal risk, he was arrested, and sent under guard to the Queens county jail. That institution, however, was presided over by Hope Mills, a keeper appointed by the royal authority; who declared that he was not the jailer of Congress, and had no authority to incarcerate a person sentenced by it. Capt. Sands, surprised that any person should be so absurdly regardful of the forms of law, carried his prisoner before the sheriff, Thomas Willetts, whom he urged to take

the culprit into custody. The sheriff, also, was a stickler for legal technicalities, and somewhat authoritatively directed Capt. Sands not to detain his prisoner without a warrant from a magistrate. Released from custody, Wooley at once made known his purpose to prosecute the guard which had been perambulating the county with him as a prisoner.

Representations of the affair were made to the provincial Congress, and that body ordered the recusant to be apprehended and sent to New York, with all convenient speed. Presided over by the humane and intelligent Woodhull, the New York Congress was not less remarkable for its patriotism than for its lenity and forbearance; and on this occasion we should expect that the culprit would receive the benefit of its mild authority. Brought before that body, his addled wits barely enabled him to make a statement as striking for its humility, as it was for the clearness with which his story established the hardship of his treatment. He said that he had not believed that Captain Sands possessed the authority to call him under arms; but, after he had been fined, he had attended the parade with the determination not to insult his officer, when the latter insulted him first, by calling him "a fellow." In the heat of his resentment he had challenged Sands to fight, and he had understood him to accede to the proposal. The prisoner declared that he had no arms, but was willing to bear them in the service of Congress, *if it was the opinion of that body that he should.* Notwithstanding his submission, and the evident hardship of his case, Congress, by a bare majority, remanded him to the custody of his guard, with peremptory directions to the Queens county jailer to keep him securely, at his own expense, until further directions. The

thrifty Congress thus vindicated its dignity without expense to the new commonwealth. Immured in jail for a month, the prisoner again made his humble petition, and was released.

As the purposes of the revolutionists became more settled, and their new moulded expectations hardened into firm resolves, their rule grew sterner and harsher towards their tory neighbors. The whigs had now gone too far to hope for pardon, and the tories must either array themselves on the side of the revolution, or cease to exist. Even submissive neutrality could no longer be permitted. On the first of May, 1776, an enrolment of all residents of Long Island, capable of bearing arms, was made by order of Congress. The number of able-bodied men found in Queens county was seventeen hundred and seventy. The militia enrolled in Suffolk county numbered a few more than two thousand; while that of Kings was only five hundred and eighty. The quota drawn from them to reinforce the Continental army was two hundred from Suffolk, one hundred and seventy-five from Queens, and fifty-eight from Kings county. It was arranged that the Queens county militia should be mustered in fourteen companies, the officers of which were appointed, and received their commissions, by the middle of June.

The most stringent efforts were now put forth to force every man, loyalist and whig alike, into the ranks of the militia. The iron despotism of military discipline, it was believed, would soon surround them all with its invisible yet impassable walls. Notwithstanding the sleepless vigilance of the whig committees, and of the partisan bands which patrolled the island, by far the largest part of the inha-

bitants of Kings and Queens counties sturdily refused to appear in arms against the royal cause. Squads of armed whigs, constantly in active pursuit, arrested the disaffected, and thrust them with entire indifference into the ranks, or the common jail. The severities with which the loyalists were now pursued afforded a fatal precedent for the British; and the subsequent sufferings of whig prisoners in the provost, the sugar houses, and the prison ships, are attributable, in some degree, to the rigors inflicted by their own partisans at this time.[1] The jails throughout the northern colonies were soon crowded with the New York loyalists, a large proportion of whom were sent from Long Island. The swamps and brush plains swarmed with them, in outlying, to escape the severities practiced upon them by the patrolling bands of the whig committees. The housebreaker and the philanthropist, the ruffian and the gentleman, he who plundered the whig under the guise

[1] The passive noncompliance of the established church gave almost as great offense to the whigs as the active resistance of the most embittered tories. "The clergy are everywhere threatened, often reviled with the most opprobrious language, sometimes treated with brutal violence. Some have been carried prisoners by armed mobs into distant provinces, where they were detained in close confinement for several weeks, and much insulted, without any crime being even alleged against them. Some have been flung into jails by committees for frivolous suspicions of plots, of which even their persecutors afterwards acquitted them. Some who were obliged to fly their own province to save their lives, have been taken prisoners, sent back, and are threatened to be tried for their lives because they fled from danger. Some have been pulled out of the reading desk because they prayed for the king, and that before independency was declared. Others have been warned to appear at militia musters with their arms, have been fined for not appearing, and threatened with imprisonment for not paying those fines. Others have had their houses plundered, etc., etc. Were every instance of this kind faithfully collected, it is probable that the sufferings of the American clergy would appear not inferior in many respects to those of the English clergy in the great rebellion of the last century." — *State of the American Church, by Rev. Charles Inglis;* published in *Hawkins' Missions,* and *Documentary History of New York.*

of a loyalist, and he whose high convictions of duty compelled his allegiance to the crown, were alike immured in the common jails. From their pestiferous cells the pleadings of many a manly voice could be heard, and the ears of the provincial Congress were filled with petitions for relief from incarceration. There were noble names attached to some of these documents; descendants, at least, of some of the best citizens of the colonies. On Long Island, the growing rigor of republican rule was felt, with bitter chagrin, by some whose names are eminent for qualities that are held illustrious in all ages, and whose virtues and talents have preserved their memory in high esteem in spite of the rancor of partisan hatred.

There was at this time residing at Islip a quaker gentleman of some estate, in whom the troubles of the times developed a perspicuity of reason, and an acuteness of analysis, that have left their ineffaceable mark upon our language. Lindley Murray, whose name is almost as devoutly hallowed for his virtues as it is famous for his eminence in learning, had retired to this remote and quiet spot to escape the angry turbulence of the city; but his benevolence would not permit him to remain in idleness while so many of his countrymen were suffering for want of one of the common necessaries of life, for which he saw a remedy in his own power to bestow. The strict blockade of the port, preserved by the British cruisers, had so obstructed the transactions of commerce that salt was sold at a price which made it almost unattainable by the poor. To supply this want, Mr. Murray established salt works at Islip, and devoted himself to the manufacture. The kindly quaker was but little molested in person by

his whig neighbors, but he retired from the country to the city when he saw the rancor which was kindling between the factions, and the severity with which some of his loyalist friends were treated. The aged Cadwallader Colden, now only titular Lieutenant Governor of New York, was residing at Jamaica, but his age and dignity did not relieve him from the attentions of his whig neighbors. His reputation for learning, and his literary eminence, have caused his loyalist devotion to be forgotten. America has forgiven his letters to the royal Ministers, who were roused to wrath against her by their contents, in consideration of his nobler works, the *History of the Five Nations*, and *Some Considerations on the Origin of Matter*. This learned and amiable man, who had been the friend and correspondent of Newton, Linnæus, and Franklin, had been driven from New York by the most humiliating outrages only a year previously. His mind, even at his great age, was keenly alive to the miseries he foresaw would ensue; and on one occasion, when he addressed a few of his plain country neighbors, who waited upon him at Jamaica for his advice in the ominous juncture of colonial affairs, Gov. Colden was affected to tears. He was greatly annoyed by the espionage, which constantly attended his movements, and by the evil reports which were spread by revolutionary zealots, who could not conceive that an old man of eighty-seven years, who had been Lieutenant Governor, was not still a formidable adversary. Letters were frequently received by Congress, and by the committees of safety, which denounced him for complicity with the counter revolutionary measures of Governor Tryon and the British generals; and he was made to feel, in various ways, the restraint

and durance imposed upon all who were not active revolutionists. His family were now suffering the more stringent penalties inflicted on the adherents to the crown.

Cadwallader Colden, his son, who resided at Spring hill, near Flushing, had been seized early in the year 1776, by the whigs, and placed in custody. He was transferred soon after to Kingston prison, in the cells of which he was now kept in close confinement. Letters exist, written by him to Congress at this time, regarding the sufferings of himself, and other gentlemen, which, were it not for the overshadowing atrocities subsequently perpetrated by the British, would seem monstrous to us. At the same time, there was residing at Flatbush another person, not only venerated on account of his great age and the dignity of the office of Chief Justice of the colony, which he had held many years, but honored even at this day for his legal and literary abilities. This gentleman was Judge Daniel Horsemanden, at this time eighty-three years of age, more than thirty of which had been spent in the service of the king and the colony. He had been appointed under a commission of the great seal to investigate the affair of the burning of the Gaspee, and sat on the bench at the trial of the negroes engaged in the conspiracy to burn the city. He is remembered chiefly for his *History of the Negro Plot;* but he possessed eminent qualities of mind which entitle his name to lasting regard on other grounds than mere literary ability. Neither his age, services, nor talents could exempt him from sharing in some measure the unpleasant consequences of thinking differently from his neighbors; although it seems to us, after a century has cooled the revolutionary fever in our veins, that the fidelity

of an aged servant to his royal master, might have been forgiven without serious damage to the republic. He was seized, by order probably of the Kings county committee, and sent out of the colony. The party of whigs who guarded him, found that his great age and infirmities required so much care and labor in his transportation, that they were soon glad to relieve themselves of the trouble of performing the injunctions of the committee, by leaving him upon the road. Judge Horsemanden died two years subsequently, at Flatbush, and was buried in Trinity church yard.

Cruelty appears so irrational that the historian is often puzzled to account for its sudden manifestation without a corresponding provocation. But it will seldom fail to be discovered, on closer search, that there is a link in the chain of events wanting, and that the violence and inhumanity at which we shuddered were the fruitful harvest sown by former partisan rigor and persecution. Of all the vile seeds which lie dormant in the human heart, none is so rapid in its germination, and so prolific in its fruit, as revenge. The horrors of the prison-ship, the provost jail, and the sugar house, were the in some respects monstrous retaliation of tories who had suffered from the harrying and imprisonment inflicted by over zealous whigs.

The loyalists of Long Island were too numerous for their whig neighbors to subject them to the severe measures, which converted many an unhappy tory into a sullen whig in other parts of the colony of New York. Not always, however, even into grudging friends; for the terrible castigations which some of the more obstinate loyalists underwent, turned them into malignant fiends. The hu-

miliating exposure of their naked persons to the indignities perpetrated by mobs, while receiving the various forms of republican discipline, exasperated many a moderate tory to a frenzy of revenge, that made him a vindictive scourge. Numbers of poor wretches, who had in some unguarded moment expressed a preference for the old government, under which they had been reared, were clothed in the republican habit of penance—a coat of tar and feathers—which possessed some infernal quality that changed them into monsters, as pitiless in soul as this cruel treatment had made them hideous in person. It was in consequence of such punishment that Simon Girty fled from civilization, and sought only to excel his savage associates in cruelty; and James Moody, of New Jersey, revenged his torments by murdering nearly a hundred whigs.

We cannot learn that the torture of the hickory rod, the laceration of the person by the rough fence rails, sometimes amounting to mutilation, or the humiliation of tar and feathers, so common elsewhere, were ever practiced on Long Island; but there were other heavy penalties in store for the offenders against republican sovereignty. In all the counties of the island, occupied as they were by colonists impelled by such widely varying motives, there was felt the mild influence of the moderate and religious Hollander, and the conscientious humanity of the Puritan, to soften the rancor of partisan hate.

Meanwhile, on board the Asia man-of-war, off New Utrecht shore, crouched that grim old lion, Governor Tryon, watching with eyes red with anger the island he was soon to ravage. From the cabin of that vessel he

issued his mandates as Governor, and dictated his dispatches to Lord Germaine. He assured the secretary of state that the warmest representations of loyalty had been made to him by the best men of Long Island, which enabled him to assure his lordship that only a small portion of its inhabitants were unfaithful to the crown. Lord Germaine replied with assurances of the great gratification his Majesty had felt on receiving the favorable relation of Governor Tryon; and the latter strove vigorously to make good his assurances.[1]

Attending the Governor on board the man-of-war, was a personage of Long Island birth, who had acted a prominent part in the outrages which had excited the people of North Carolina to revolution. This was Edmund Fanning, the private secretary of Gov. Tryon, and the executioner of his most atrocious acts of tyranny. Eight years before, the rapacity of Secretary Fanning, joined to the arrogance and oppression of Gov. Tryon, had driven the North Carolinians to revolt. By the exaction of enormous fees for marriage licenses, he had compelled a large number of families to associate without the legal forms of matrimony; and by the extortion of ruinous charges for the reissue of deeds to the small proprietors, he had exasperated many of them to the verge of desperation.

When, in 1768, the revolt which his atrocities had excited was subdued, Fanning's cruelty found ample food to satiate his revenge in the execution of the revolutionists. But the climax of his villanies was only reached in 1771, when, having taken James Few prisoner in a skirmish,

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[1] *Gov. Tryon's letter to Lord Germaine.*— Document 2 in Appendix.

during which Fanning with characteristic cowardice had skulked away in fright, he caused the unfortunate insurgent to be immediately executed. The wretch had not long before seduced the affianced sweetheart of poor Few; and having by the ruin of his mistress driven the lover to desperation, the Secretary dreaded his vengeance. The wily and adroit villain did not entirely escape the vengeance of the people he had outraged. He had been twice dragged from his house by the infuriated colonists, and severely flogged, while his dwelling was sacked, and his costly furniture completely demolished. This rapacious man had now returned to the shores of his native island, and his brain, fertile in schemes of villany, was now doubtless contriving some potent mischief for the place of his birth.[1]

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[1] Edmund Fanning subsequently received a commission of colonel from Gov. Fanning, with permission to raise a regiment of provincial troops on Long Island. He succeeded in enlisting four hundred and sixty men, among whom were some of the most desperate wretches of an army that was eminent for the infamy and inhumanity of some of its troops. His regiment, styled the Associated Refugees, was for a long time stationed at Huntingdon; but wherever it went, his soldiers made their name a synonym for terror and atrocity. Among their feats of inhumanity, a favorite practice was to obtain entrance, by craft or violence, to the house of some of the island farmers, whom they suspected of possessing a secret hoard of money or valuables. The proprietor was immediately seized and bound to a bed post, and tortured by holding a lighted candle to his fingers until the pain extracted the desired information, from himself or his family. The exploits of Secretary Fanning are narrated at length in *Caruthers' Life of David Caldwell,* and *Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents.*

CHAPTER III.

Partisan Warfare and Loyalist Leaders.

Washington's attention had been often anxiously directed from the siege of Boston to the unsatisfactory condition of affairs on Long Island; and, although averse to inflicting even merited suffering upon any, he had become aware that it was now unavoidable, and that the stern necessities of war called for the expatriation or entire subjugation of its loyalist inhabitants. It was evident that the British army, so closely beleaguered in Boston, were about to abandon that city; and he already saw that New York would be their next point of attack. Congress had repeatedly communicated its fears to Washington that plots were hatching on Long Island, for subverting the new government, and he had always replied by counselling humane and cautious treatment of its misled people.

On the 19th of May, a report was read to the provincial Congress, by Mr. Morris, which indicated that Washington possessed information relating to affairs on Long Island, that had terminated his indecision. So alarming was the tenor of the communication which he desired to make to Congress, and so imperative the necessity of secrecy in regard to it, that he desired Congress to pledge each of its members by a special obligation to keep it private. Accordingly, on the same day, Gen. Woodhull the president, after

himself taking a solemn oath to keep secret all matters submitted to that body by Gen. Washington, called each member from his seat and received a special obligation from him of the same purport. The General, on being informed of the compliance of Congress, at once communicated to it, by Messrs. Scott and Morris, documents which contained the details of a scheme for an insurrection of the loyalists of Kings and Queens counties, which had made alarming progress, and which threatened the most dangerous consequences. A letter from Jonathan Sturges, of Fairfield, Conn., was read, which stated that it had been noticed for some time past that the tories of Connecticut had in considerable numbers left the state for Long Island; and his letter enclosed a list of the names of the deserters, as they were termed.[1] It was evident, that a junction of the loyalists of Connecticut and Long Island with the Ministerial forces, was contemplated, for the purpose, as the committee declared, "of oppressing the friends of liberty in these colonies."

Mr. Morris further informed Congress that several persons, believed to be British spies, had been observed engaged in such an examination of various points on the south shore of Long Island as rendered them objects of suspicion. These persons, who were strangers to the patriotic inhabitants, were undoubtedly engaged in fixing upon proper places for the landing of British troops. It was known, also, that the people of Hempstead kept up a constant communication with the ships of war; and from the details of the plot already discovered, it was believed

[1] *Journal of Provincial Congress*, II, 114.

that a concert of action was thus maintained. A sloop-load of tories had been captured on the Sound, who had admitted that they were on their way to Long Island; and Jonathan Sturges said that information enough had been obtained, from their admissions, to make it evident that "a horrid plot had been laid to destroy the people of this country, and that Long Island was appointed for the head-quarters." Matthew Adgate, chairman of the committee of Kings district, sent a letter, in which he says secret information had reached him, of "a plot as deep as hell to bring the country to ruin."[1] The bearer of the letter was, at the moment of its reading, awaiting the examination of Congress. He had incurred the imminent danger of assassination, for the purpose of obtaining certain information of the projects of the disaffected, by procuring admission to their councils in the guise of a friend.

Mr. Vanderbilt, the deputy from Kings county, informed the house that a resident of Queens county, named John Hendrickson, was in possession of information that would tend to unveil the mystery of the plot, and he was accordingly summoned before it on the next day. His long, rambling narrative teemed with incidents that suggested rather than proved the existence of a conspiracy. It is not without interest to us, in its quaint representation of the tone of thought, and peculiarity of manners, prevailing at the time, and it details most clearly the course and spirit of the sentiments of the Island inhabitants.[2] It

[1] *Journal of Provincial Congress*, II, 116.

[2] "Gen. Greene communicated to Congress the information that the tories of Long Island were arming, nearly five hundred stands of arms having passed his camp within a few days, mostly in the hands of people who were known to be unfriendly."

would be deemed at this day, however, utterly worthless as evidence of treasonable action. Our old acquaintance, Richard Hewlett, of course figures in the narrative as a principal actor.[1]

At the close of his long examination, after being sworn to preserve a strict secrecy regarding the subject of his narrative, Hendrickson was dismissed, having been assured by President Gen. Woodhull that his name would be concealed. The deposition of another person, a resident of Albany county, was read, to show that the conspiracy extended throughout the colony. The provincial Congress was thoroughly convinced of the existence of a formidable plot, and exhibited their alarm by the lengthy debates which ensued during the next three days. Gen. Washington himself fully sympathized with the anxiety of its members, and addressed to them, on the third day succeeding the examination, a request that they would communicate their decision, as soon as it was *formed*, to Gen. Putnam, who was to act as commander-in-chief during his absence in Philadelphia. Gen. Putnam was also instructed to carry out their measures with the military force under his command. It is evident that Washington anticipated developments, that would require a large detachment of his army to march against the loyalists of Long Island.[2] The mystery of their projects was, however, so well preserved, that little more than the fact of the existence of a plot was elicited, and nothing that would criminate its leaders.

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[1] See the minutes of examination, Document 7.

[2] See Washington's instructions to Gen. Putnam regarding the arrest of tories on Long Island, in Documents.

Notwithstanding the failure of Congress to pierce the veil of secrecy which covered the objects and persons of these conspirators, they had actually designed a plan of operations, more formidable and dangerous than even the fears of Congress pictured. Men of the most reckless daring and desperate fortunes, had combined with citizens of the greatest wealth and most reputable character in the colony, for the accomplishment of a design that appalls us, contemplating at this day the possibility of its success. The plot undoubtedly originated with the energetic and unscrupulous Gov. Tryon, on board the Asia, and was to be developed and executed by the loyalists of Long Island. So adroit and secret had been his manœuvres, that he had surrounded Washington and Congress with an invisible line of pickets, which guarded every avenue of approach, and watched every motion.

From the middle of May to the 20th of June, 1776, vague rumors of evil that was brewing had agitated Congress; and Washington, whose fears were awakened for his country rather than for his own person, watched the disaffected districts of Long Island, through the sleepless eyes of a score of spies. It was known that some persons of royalist sentiments had left Ulster county about the first of May, and traveled cautiously through Westchester county to Whitestone ferry, where they had crossed to Long Island, and had lodged at the tavern of the tory Simonson, at Hempstead. These were some of the strangers whose appearance had excited the curiosity of John Hendrickson. One of them, named Abraham Bull, had been declared to be a dangerous man; and his companions were supposed to be persons whose desperate character had induced their

selection as accomplices. From Simonson's they proceeded to the house of the arch-tory, Capt. Richard Hewlett, by whom they were entertained, and the next morning were carried on board of the enemy's ships of war. Nothing, however, had hitherto transpired regarding their mission, and the spies had failed to drag from its concealment the secret which was so rigidly guarded.[1] Meanwhile, the exigencies of the service called for the recruiting of the thinned ranks of the Continental army, and, on the first of June, a draft of three thousand men was ordered from the colony of New York. Of the seventeen hundred and seventy able-bodied men of Queens county who had been enrolled, not more than one-third had yet appeared in arms, notwithstanding the vigilance of the militia officers. But the increasing activities of the commonwealth made the demands for reinforcements more and more inexorable; and, as every citizen was compelled to stand his lot, the whigs determined that their tory neighbors should aid them in the dangerous business of fighting. The attempt to enforce the draft upon a population so averse to its object, spread the greatest dismay in both Kings and Queens counties. So many of the loyalists fled again to their secret holds, that the whigs were alarmed in their turn, lest the quota drafted should be made up entirely from their own number. The most stringent orders were issued to compel the delinquents into the ranks. As numbers of the loyalists were flying to other colonies, the roads of the island were everywhere patrolled or guarded, and all stragglers were apprehended. Every

[1] How close was the scrutiny maintained by one neighbor upon the conduct of another, is illustrated by the letter of denunciation of certain citizens of Jamaica, sent to the provincial Congress. See Document *7a*.

person engaged in official business was furnished with a pass, endorsed "On the service of the United Colonies;" and those who could not produce this were immediately arrested. The day fixed for the arrival of the Long Island quota was at hand, and scarcely the first steps towards preparation had been taken. A stirring and earnest appeal was issued by Gen. John Morin Scott, the officer commanding the contingent forces; but the 19th of June arrived, and the Queens county levies had not been raised. The roll of Capt. Peter Nostrand's company exhibited the absence of two hundred and fifty-three members, in Oyster Bay; and in two other companies, there were one hundred and thirty-three deserters.[1] To drag them from their hiding places in the swamps and thickets, was a task fraught with no small danger; for these hunted and desperate men were now driven almost to despair by their persecutions, as they deemed the vigorous acts of the whigs, and could not be expected to submit patiently to consignment to this hated service while they had arms in their

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[1] The minute details of the orders for arrests indicated how thoroughly the work of denunciation had been performed:

QUEENS CO., June 10th, 1776.

To Mr. Thomas Mitchell, Lt.:

You are hereby required to march your company into Capt. Peter Nostrand's district, and divide them into as many parts as you may think proper, for the purpose of aiding and assisting him to bring forthwith (283) defaulting persons belonging to that company, or such of them as you can find, and forthwith send or bring them to Samuel Nicholls, and there safely secure them until further orders.

JOHN SANDS, Col.

Capt. Daniel Nostrand received orders at the same time to march into Lt. Robt. Coles's district and apprehend sixty-three defaulters; and Capt. Philip Valentine was directed to proceed with his company into Capt. Seaman's district, and secure seventy delinquent militia-men, and simultaneously, Lieut Robert Coles marched into the military district of Capt. D. Laton, for the purpose of arresting one hundred and sixteen others.

hands. Rumors were current of several bodies of armed loyalists, who had determined to defend themselves from the operations of the levy, and had posted themselves in strong positions. The clemency of Washington himself gave way, in view of the menacing position of affairs, and he now ordered a detachment to proceed against the disaffected, who he says, "had taken up arms on Long Island, but we have not as yet been able to apprehend them, having concealed themselves in different woods and morasses."

The commanding officer of the district was that Capt. John Sands, now advanced to the rank of Colonel, whose zeal for convicting his tory neighbors we have already witnessed. His patriotic energy, still unabated, was now quickened by the excitement of hunting out of their hiding places the persons who had set at naught his authority; and accordingly, on July 25th, he directed Lieut. Mitchell to march into Capt. Nostrand's district, and aid him in arresting deserters.[1]

Another expedition against the loyalists was organized at Jamaica, by that ardent partisan Captain Benjamin Birdsall, and pushed on towards Hempstead. He was eager for the chase, and appeared before Congress to urge the detachment of five hundred troops to aid in the enterprise, promising with this force to arrest all the recusants in a week. Some of the less belligerent of the whigs of Queens county had devised a scheme in which their patriotism could be manifested by a very cheap expenditure of their own valor; and, in furtherance of it, Captain Birdsall

[1] June 5th, the provincial Congress ordered the arrest or summoning of thirty-eight persons, etc.

was commissioned to propose that Congress should authorize the quota for that county to be levied entirely upon the loyalists who were in hiding, and should send a regiment of five hundred strong to catch them. They generously devoted their tory neighbors to the service of fighting their country's battles, and requested Congress to take the trouble of hunting down, and making soldiers of them.

Several detachments of Continental and Militia troops were now closing in upon the well-hunted loyalists. A mild dragonnade was recommended, and in some places practiced after a moderate fashion; and the proposition to arrest leading loyalists, and hold them as hostages, making their safety depend upon the conduct of their fellow citizens, was rejected in Congress by only a small majority. One of the detachments which marched against the defaulters in Hempstead was composed of the minute men of Jamaica, and accompanied by the narrator, Stephen Rider. It was known that a party of the tories was concealed in the swamps near the head of Demott's mill-pond. The miller was entirely in the interest of the loyalists, and kept a sharp look-out for the patrolling squads of militia, or the hunting parties of whigs, which so often beat up the woods and swamps in his neighborhood. On their approach, the tory miller hung out a white cloth as a signal for the deserters to retire to the huts which had been built on the little island in the swamp. It was seldom that their pursuers ventured into the recesses of these intricate and dangerous hiding places; contenting themselves with sending a volley or two through the bushes, to startle the enemy they could not fight. On this occasion, a party of nine loyalists were lying in two

sedge boats, entirely hidden by the dense foliage of overhanging flags. They had determined that they would not be taken alive, and had pledged themselves to shoot the first man daring enough to undertake it. Some of the number were residents of the neighborhood, but there were strangers in the company, who were doubtless engaged in the conspiracy then maturing. They had remained near the head of the pond during the day, but at night had slept in an adjacent house, and, aware of the near approach of the whigs, were endeavoring to escape. The pursuing party were confident of the proximity of their enemies, and for the purpose of discovering their hiding place, Stephen Rider climbed to the top of a tall oak overlooking the swamp. While reconnoitering its recesses, a ball whistled close to his ear, and at the same instant he saw by the smoke the hiding place from which it came. At the request of the bold whig, a loaded musket was handed up to him, and aiming for the spot from whence the smoke issued, he fired, and shot one of the party through the body, upon which the rest surrendered. The wounded tory was a young man scarcely eighteen years of age, named George Smith. The ball had entered just below his shoulder blade, as he was leaning over the side of the boat in the act of leaving it.[1] Stephen Rider paid the heavy penalty of thirteen months imprisonment in the provost jail of New York, and a large fine in addition, when the British obtained possession of the island.

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[1] Notwithstanding the severity of his wound, the young man recovered, although the blood issued from the apertures in his back and breast at every breath.— *Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents.*

Other acts of resistance, and the appearance of a determination on the part of the loyalists to defend themselves, delayed the execution of the order for their arrest, whenever they assembled in considerable numbers. Capt. Birdsall, however, continued his activity, and pressed his old neighbors with an ardor and pertinacity that must have earned for him their hearty detestation. His last expedition against the tories of Long Island occurred on the 27th of July, a month later than the period of our narrative. Promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he had been ordered to take command of a detachment of recruits, and proceed to his old patrolling ground along the Rockaway beach, as far as Hempstead, where he was to place Lieut. Townshend upon the coast, for the purpose of discovering the approach of the enemy, in his attempts to land. All communication with the ships of war was to be prevented, and those who attempted it were to be placed in confinement. The moment the enemy showed signs of landing, expresses were to be sent immediately to Col. Sands's headquarters, at Westbury, and all the cattle and stock to be driven off. Col. Birdsall had taken his new position but two days, when he received news of a body of armed tories who were encamped in a strong position, at the distance of three or four miles. The commander of one of the detachments near Hempstead, was Lieut. Col. Caary, of New Haven. This officer sent a number of the inhabitants as prisoners to Gen. Greene's headquarters, on the 29th of June, with a descriptive list, the phraseology of which characterizes the writer as strongly as his comments do the loyalists. Some of these were captured at the skirmish in the swamp near Demott's

millpond, and the others were taken as their ill fortune threw them into the Colonel's hands.[1]

Between two of the numerous, slender creeks which enter Hempstead bay, lay the rich neck of land called Fort Neck, belonging to the staunch loyalist, Judge Thomas Jones. One of these streams, called Massapequa creek, was bordered by an extensive swamp, whose dense foliage and tangled thickets, of catbriar and other undergrowth, concealed many a snug fastness of dry ground. It was natural that a gentleman of such firm loyalty as Judge Jones, should be surrounded by a number of his partisans, as well for his own as for their protection. On the approach of their old enemy, Col. Ben Birdsall, they took to their old hiding places in the swamp, but not soon enough to escape his vigilance. Information reached him from Joshua Ketcham, a whig committee man, of Huntington, that thirty or forty armed tories were encamped in the Massapequa swamp. Arrangements were at once entered into for a grand hunt, which was appointed for

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[1] This schedule of names and characters possesses an interest for us at this day, that will warrant its insertion here:

"Joseph Denton and John Hutchings, from Jamaica jail. John Carmon, he received powder, and absconded into the woods. Andrew Sollen, a disaffected person taken in the woods. Jacob Lambertson, found with his gun charged. Benj. Pettit, he was in the swamp in the fight, and had powder from the Asia man-of-war. Ezekiel Rainer, in the woods hid. Richard Smith, in the swamp battle, and had powder from the Asia. Jeremiah Bedel, a disaffected person. Daniel Smith, in the swamp battle. Elijah Rainer, hid in the swamp. Joseph Bedle, lame, a disaffected person. Nathan Smith, received powder from the Asia, absconded in the woods and appears to know much of the scheme. Townsend Weeks, a dammed rascal and the greatest tory. William McConn, Thos. Fleet, Peter Wheeler, Samuel Townshend and John Fleet, declared they would sooner fight for the king than the Congress, and totally deny the authority of that body. James Cogswell, a gun stealer, or informer from Newport. Henry Durland, said Washington was more concerned in the conspiracy than any one."

the succeeding Tuesday, four days subsequently. The town of Huntington was to send two hundred men, which, joined to the same number from Birdsall's command, would enable him, he said, to drive the swamp, "and take prisoners the whole of these deserting armed tories."[1] Col. Birdsall was in high spirits at the prospect of success in his expedition, and expressed the utmost confidence that it would meet the approval of his commanding officer.

Whether unlooked for exigencies of the service, the imminence of the invasion by the British, or the jealousy of Col. Sands, prevented the accomplishment of his adventure, we are unable to learn; but that it did not succeed in clearing the snug retreat of loyalists, we learn from the fact recited by Mr. Onderdonk, that after the battle of Brooklyn, the hunted tories "came out of Massapequa swamp, and swinging their hats, huzzaed for King George."

It is difficult at this day, when all the rancor of partisan strife has ceased, to refrain from hearty sympathy for the sturdy loyalists who endured such rigors for conscience sake. That must have been a principle having roots deep down in strong hearts, which could impel the abandonment of home and family to seek an abode in the dreary solitude and misery of a morass.

By the last of June, the measures of the conspirators had matured so far that they began to press them to a fulfilment. In the plot were now engaged many of the most respectable men of the island, who had combined with others of desperate character and low fortune, to accomplish a design which only such could ever have

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[1] Ben Birdsall's letter.—*Journal Provincial Congress*, II, 180.

deemed possible. David Mathews, the mayor of New York, resided for a portion of the year at his country-seat in Flatbush; and although, by his great adroitness and caution, he managed to avoid such complicity with the plot as could be proven, he was undoubtedly the lieutenant of the chief conspirator, Gov. Tryon. Mathews returned to the city immediately after its occupation by the British, and remained in high favor during the war. Near him, in the village of Flatbush, resided William Axtel, a loyalist gentleman of wealth and influence, afterwards Colonel of the British provincial militia. Dr. Samuel Martin, of Hempstead, and Dr. Charles Arden, of Jamaica, like most of the gentlemen of education and high social position, were attached to the crown, and had become deeply engaged in the plot. Capt. Archibald Hamilton, of Flushing, a proud gentleman of considerable estate, who looked upon the whig committee as a vulgar herd of mechanics and tradesmen, was, in common with almost all the crown officers of Long Island, among the conspirators.

One of the persons whose name was associated with them claims more attention from us than a passing notice, not so much from the importance of his political, as of his social position. This was John Rapalye, of Brooklyn Ferry, whose great estate is now a part of the thickly populated portion of the city. The narrative of his suffering and sacrifices for the royal cause will find a place in these pages hereafter.

Of the ninety-eight persons who were ultimately charged with complicity in the plot, fifty-six were residents of Kings and Queens counties. At the head of the list stands the

name of Captain Richard Hewlett, who now felt that he had an opportunity for revenging the persecution of his whig enemies, and who doubtless entered with hearty zeal into the project.

Although rumors of the existence of some dangerous conspiracy had thickened each day, it was not until the 20th of June that developments of its nature reached the ears of the revolutionary authorities. In the jail of the city were confined two soldiers of Washington's life guard, named Michael Lynch and Thomas Hickey, who had been arrested on a charge of passing bills, counterfeiting the Continental issues. Several residents of Queens county had been tried for manufacturing these fraudulent bills, and the persons in custody were only suspected of uttering them. They were, however, the vile instruments by which the designs of the more prudent and respectable conspirators were to be carried out. Emboldened by the durance of these desperate men, one Collier, a waiter at one of the five taverns whose proprietors were implicated, divulged such important fragments of their secret, as caused unusual consternation and alarm among the few to whom they were communicated. The provincial Congress immediately appointed Mr. Morris, Mr. Jay, and Mr. Livingston, a committee, to examine and try all persons who might be implicated in the conspiracy. Futher developments gradually accumulated, until it was manifest that, while the designs of the conspirators extended throughout the colony, its leaders and chief actors were residents of Long Island, and their first object was the possession of the person of Washington. On the accomplishment of this purpose, bodies of tories,

at numerous points within the colony, were to seize the occasion of the universal confusion which would ensue, and to rise upon the whigs, paralyzed and panic struck by the great misfortune. The part to be performed by Hickey and Lynch, was the seizure of Gen. Washington, who was to be betrayed by Mary Gibbons, a female said to be in his confidence.[1]

We cannot follow the steps of this curious investigation further than it relates to Long Island; but full details of the affair are furnished the reader in a volume recently published, entitled, *Minutes of a Conspiracy against the Liberties of America.*

Orders were at once issued by Gen. Washington to Gen. Greene at Brooklyn, for the arrest of several persons on Long Island; and explicit directions were given that the capture of Mayor Mathews, at Flatbush, should be effected precisely at one o'clock in the night, an instant search being made for treasonable correspondence before it could be destroyed. This acute and sagacious tory had, however, permitted no written evidence of his culpability to remain. Fifty-six summonses were served upon leading loyalists who resided so far from the camp that an expedition for their capture could not have reached them before they would have had information of its object, and have sought safety in some of their secret fastnesses, or on board the vessels of war. In a day or two, information arrived that several of the conspirators, despairing of escape, were concealed in a forest near Jamaica. We learn from the testimony of one of the witnesses, that the American

[1] For full account see *American Archives*, VI, 4th series; also *Proceedings of the Provincial Congress*, I.

riflemen were so numerous along the bay as to render it very difficult to get on board the vessels of war, and these fugitives had therefore taken to the woods. Capt. Marinus Willett was at once ordered to take command of a troop of horse, and proceed to their rendezvous, taking every precaution to secure the arrest of the whole party. On his arrival at the village, he obtained information that the conspirators, conceiving their situation to be thoroughly desperate, had determined to sell their lives at the dearest price to their adversaries. A party, numbering eighteen, had accordingly taken up a strong position in a wood, on the top of a hill near the village, where they designed to make their defense from behind forest trees, in the manner practiced in savage warfare. The loyalists doubtless believed themselves secure from attack by Capt. Willett's troop, as it was impossible for cavalry to reach their position. Capt. Willett was a soldier not easily intimidated, or turned aside from an enterprise, by unforeseen difficulties. Obtaining a small reinforcement at Jamaica, he dismounted his troop, and at once proceeded to surround the eminence upon which the loyalists were posted. "Unfortunately for the tory desperadoes, Capt. Marinus Willett was a most adroit and skilful Indian fighter, having served with credit in the old French war. In this sort of warfare he was perfectly at home." Using the forest trees as screens for his approach, he drew his lines closer and closer around them until within musket shot, when a brisk fire was opened upon the besieging party, which was returned by the latter as they continued to advance, until one of the loyalists was killed, and several dangerously wounded. In this species of warfare, with the slightest preponderance

of numbers, the advantages must be greatly in favor of the assailants; as their fire is directed towards a body of men confined within small compass, some of whose number are compelled to be constantly exposed to one or another portion of the ring of foes, while these, dispersed over a wide circuit, are but slightly exposed as they change cover. The position of the loyalists becoming at last untenable, and several of their number no longer capable of resistance, the remainder surrendered, and were brought prisoners to New York. Had the tories been headed by Capt. Richard Hewlett, the former associate of Capt. Willett in the old French war, the victory of the latter would not have been obtained without harder fighting.[1]

At the trial of Thomas Hickey and Lynch the gunsmith, Gilbert Forbes, one of the accused, made a statement, on his examination, of the plan of the attack on Brooklyn and New York, which was to have ensued on the consummation of the plot. It is remarkable for its substantial identity with that actually adopted by Gen. Howe on the 27th of August, two months subsequently. A discharged sergeant of the Royal Artillery, named Graham, employed as a spy, had accurately surveyed the Brooklyn works, of which he had drawn plans and concerted the whole scheme of attack. The result of Sergeant Graham's observations had been forwarded to Gov. Tryon,[2] and were doubtless submitted to Gen. Howe on his arrival. A witness, who had accompanied Absalom Bull to Simonson's tavern at Hempstead, declared that he was informed that cannon

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[1] *Minutes of a Conspiracy*, Philadelphia, 1865.

[2] *American Archives*, VI, 4th series, 1178, Forbes' testimony.

had been provided in several places on Long Island, and that three field-pieces and a mortar were concealed under Simonson's barn floor. Orders were immediately issued for the arrest of Simonson, innkeeper in Hempstead, and the capture of all his guns and munitions of war; but the alarm had already reached that village, and both innkeeper and field-pieces had disappeared. Hickey and Lynch were convicted of treason, principally on the evidence of a "jail bird who had played tory," and who had obtained their confidence. Hickey was accordingly hung, a few days subsequently.

The greatest watchfulness was now observed by the adherents of Congress over all those loyalist officers who had distinguished themselves in the old French war, and particularly over the partisan leaders who had obtained any reputation in the irregular service employed against the Indians. One of the persons of this class, considered most dangerous, was Major Robert Rogers. The story of his adventures is still preserved in his own narrative, as well as by his association with Putnam, who had served as a lieutenant in his celebrated corps. These two noted partisans met once more in New York; Putnam at the head of a division of the American army, and Rogers under arrest as a tory. He was at the time doubtless engaged in enlisting the corps of refugees; which he effected, among the loyalists of Long Island, soon after the battle of the 27th, having made his escape from the custody of the Americans. In the same letter to Congress in which he communicates these facts, Washington says: "The plot has been traced up to Gov. Tryon, and Major Rogers appears to have been a principal agent between him and the per-

sons concerned in it. The plot has been communicated to some of the army, and part of my guard engaged in it. Thomas Hickey, one of them, has been tried, and by the unanimous opinion of a court martial is sentenced to die, having enlisted himself, and engaged others. The enclosed copy of a resolve of the provincial Congress will show that some of the disaffected on Long Island have taken up arms. I have agreeably, to their request, sent a party after them, having concealed themselves in different woods and morasses."

The plot undoubtedly, had its inception on board of the Asia, was matured at Flatbush, the residence of Mayor Mathews, and relied for its principal sustainers and adherents upon the loyalists of Long Island. The nightly return of Mathews to his residence, not more than four or five miles from the landing-place of boats from the Asia, and his daily return to the city, made him the fittest organ of communication between the Governor and the loyalists.[1] The conspiracy failed to accomplish anything, except to increase the rigors of the surveillance over the Long Island loyalists, who felt its influence for many months subsequently.

One of the personages who bore a prominent part in the scenes of partisan warfare on Long Island, deserves more than the incidental notice he has received from its historians. As Col. Birdsall's name will not again appear in this narrative of revolutionary affairs, and as his story

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[1] Mary Gibbons disappears from history immediately after the committee becoming acquainted with her claims to their notice, asked General Washington to attend one of their sittings for the purpose of learning the tenor of the evidence relating to her.

is fairly illustrative of the fortunes of many of his comrades, the order of events will be anticipated in its narration.

Immediately after the battle of the 27th of August the Long Island militia began to melt away, and it totally disappeared on the disastrous field of White Plains. Col. Birdsall was in consequence an officer without a command; for he was too seriously compromised by his partisan zeal for a safe return to Long Island. In November, of the same year, he wrote a detailed narrative of his services and sufferings[1] in the cause of liberty. Col. Birdsall was often employed in affairs relating to Long Island during the war, and, from his intimate knowledge of its geography and people, was generally chosen as the flag officer, whenever access to it was permitted by the British. On these occasions he was really performing the office of a spy, and his quick eye and sharp intelligence were fully employed in catching every detail of information that could be of use. At one time he was sent with money and sustenance for the starving American prisoners at the Wallabout, and in Flatbush. Attached to the subscription list, with the names of the donors to the fund for this purpose, is the signature of Benj. Birdsall, certifying to the delivery of the money to the prisoners. Col. Birdsall's acute attention to everything around him, and his queries addressed to the farmers of Brooklyn and Flatbush, had not escaped the notice of the British, and complaints were accordingly made to the commanding officer that the conditions of his admission to the island had been vio-

[1] Document 5.

lated. On one of these occasions he narrowly escaped falling a victim to the vindictiveness of his old enemies, the tories.

In January, 1778, having been granted permission to visit some part of the island, the limits of which were strictly defined in his pass, his steps were doubtless dogged by his old neighbors, who had not forgiven him the close hunting they had endured from him in Massepequa swamp and Jamaica woods. They had to settle with him a long account for shot-guns and rifles which he had so unceremoniously taken; for fishing boats destroyed; and for scores of fat cattle driven from their farms, to feed the American army. Having overstepped the limits specified in his pass he had forfeited its privileges, but he was still fortunate enough to be arrested by the authorities, instead of falling into the hands of the refugee and tory bands which prowled about the island. On the charge of having broken his parole, he was taken to New York, and imprisoned in the deadly Provost for several months. Mr. Onderdonk says he was held as a hostage for one David Rice. During his imprisonment, Birdsall was subjected to all the cruelties which have invested that prison-house with so many dreadful memories. The stout partisan had little amenity to hope for in the surveillance of the cruel Cunningham, and this wretch lost no opportunity of extinguishing even that hope. On one occasion Capt. Birdsall requested the use of pen, ink, and paper, for the purpose of acquainting his family with his situation. Refused, with the customary expressions of insult, the bold spirit of the whig leader revolted against the indignity, and he returned a scornful retort.

The rage of the cowardly and vindictive keeper was too great to be expended in the vile language which he poured out, and he accompanied this with a thrust of his sword, intended to murder his unarmed prisoner. Birdsall had the good fortune to escape with a severe wound in the shoulder, "from which the blood flowed freely." The malice of Cunningham was still unsatisfied, and his method of gratifying it was more disgraceful than this assault. He thrust Birdsall into a filthy cell, without permitting the least assistance to be offered him, or any companion who could alleviate his misery. Nothing but the indomitable spirit of the man, joined to the vigor of his constitution, hardened in the privations of partisan warfare, enabled him to survive the terrible infliction of wounds, starvation, and filth. With the aid of strips from his linen shirt, he contrived to dress his wounds; and for "several months endured, in solitude and misery, every indignity which the malice of the provost marshal urged him to inflict upon a *rebel*."

Gen. Washington, when made acquainted with his situation, took measures to have his wife and children conveyed from Long Island to Dover, in Dutchess county, where they remained until peace was proclaimed. During his incarceration, Col. Birdsall, who had only held his rank in the Long Island militia, was promoted to the same grade in the Continental service, and, soon after, arrangements were made for his exchange. Mr. Thompson's account differs, in some material respects, from that here given on good authority. As it is possibly a true narration of another captivity[1] to which the adventurous

[1] *Thompson's History of Long Island.*

spirit of the partisan officer subjected him, it is here subjoined: "Soon after the evacuation of New York by the Americans, a circumstance occurred which exhibited, in bold relief, the intrepidity and patriotism of Capt. Birdsall. An American vessel, laden with flour for the army, had been captured by the British in the Sound; and Capt. Birdsall believing she might be retaken, offered, if the undertaking were approved by his superior officer, to superintend the enterprise in person. The proposal met the approbation of the commanding officer, and the captain, with a few select men, made the experiment, and succeeded in sending the vessel to her original destination. But it so happened that he and one of his men were taken prisoners by the enemy."

There is much more dramatic interest in Mr. Thompson's story of Birdsall's capture; but two or three well authenticated events in his life can hardly be reconciled with the occurrence of it at the period mentioned. Mr. Thompson says it was soon after the retreat from New York; but, on November 28th, 1776, Col. Birdsall wrote a letter from New Haven, stating one of his grievances to be his having no employment in the army.

Mr. Onderdonk, in his volume entitled *Queens County in the Olden Time*, under date of 1778, says that Birdsall was taken on the 6th of January of that year, while under a flag of truce on Long Island, for the purpose of bringing off two families. In 1782, Col. Birdsall made several visits to the Island, crossing from Stamford to the British camp at Lloyd's Neck. From the commanding officer, Col. Upham, he received permission to proceed to South Oyster Bay, with the proviso that he should return within ten days,

and be accompanied everywhere by a loyalist named John Hewlett. The British had learned to distrust Birdsall's eyes and tongue, and they placed the restraint of a tory companion upon him, who must keep the spy himself under espionage. On his return, Birdsall was permitted to take with him his two sons, and some of his property. It is these minute narrations which convey to us the actual condition of the British rule, and serve to paint for us an interesting picture of the manner and spirit of the times. From them we learn that a more kindly and humane spirit than we are prone to believe, must have often controlled the British officers; for the indulgences shown to so fierce a partisan as Benj. Birdsall, indicate a gentler rule than civil war usually produces.

Col. Birdsall wrote to Gen. Clinton a brief narration of his visit, which exhibits the fact that his loyalist companion, John Hewlett, had not taken him on his route blindfolded. "I effected a four weeks' disagreeable journey, and was sixteen days on the island, during seven of which I was in [the British] camp on Lloyd's Neck. The fare in the camp is hard, and it is the wickedest place I ever met with. There was no restraint. I noticed everything. The larger farmers and traders do well, but all others are worn out. There were thirty wood vessels in Huntington harbor, convoyed by three small privateers, called the Lloyd Neck fleet. A ton of hay cost the king £30."[1]

One of the residents of Kings county, named John Rapalye, much esteemed for his services as a public officer and citizen, had fallen under the ban of the whig

[1] *Onderdonk's Queens County in Olden Time.*

committee at an early period of the contest. A conscientious royalist, his professions of political faith, notwithstanding the moderation of their expression, had obliterated all memory of his excellences as a citizen; and he was accordingly denounced by the revolutionary tribunal as a tory, and a probable conspirator. One of the witnesses at the recent trial had spoken of the use intended to be made by the conspirators of John Rapalye's periagua; and another had stated that the British were to march by Rapalye's mill, after landing at New Utrecht; but not a word of testimony criminated the man, whose life was entirely blameless, except for a frank expression of his honest preference for the old government. All the territory in the city of Brooklyn which is enclosed between Fulton and Sands streets, the East River and the Navy yard, comprising nearly two hundred acres, was the property of John Rapalye. He was the deputy of Leffert Lefferts, the town clerk of Brooklyn, and performed the active duties of the office. Denounced to the committee of safety of the provincial Congress, he was arrested, or surrendered himself into custody. Perhaps it was worse fortune for John Rapalye that nothing could be alleged against him. His excellent reputation, and fearless character, marked his example too strongly, and he was accordingly driven into exile, taking up his residence for the time in New Jersey.

During the succeeding August, this loyalist exile was found in possession of a flock of sheep, which it was believed were intended for Gen. Howe's army, then encamped on Staten Island. His associate escaped, with a number of fat wethers, to the British lines, leaving

Rapalye to bear the brunt of whig indignation. Such was the extreme moderation of the provincial Congress in the exercise of its authority, that even now all that was required of the recusant royalist was that he should take the oath of submission, and live at peace. But loyalty with John Rapalye was not a habit to be put on and off so carelessly. Having sturdily refused to make any compromise of his political principles, Rapalye was sent under guard to Connecticut, where a sterner republican rule afforded fewer indulgences than in the colony of New York; and, accordingly, on his arrival at Norwich he was thrust into the common jail.[1] The thrifty republicans of New England, however, not unwilling that their prisoner should relieve the State of his support, granted him leave of absence, on his parole to return within six weeks; and during that time he was bound by the same obligation to do or say nothing against the republic, nor to give intelligence or advice concerning its affairs. The council also passed a resolution requesting the furloughed prisoner to furnish five *detenues* whom it named, and other persons not specified, with money, at his own risk of repayment. In consideration of this privilege, he was permitted to remove such members of his family as he chose from Brooklyn to Norwich.

A person of some note on Long Island, at this time a prisoner in Norwich jail, was named as one of the beneficiaries of Rapalye's loan. This was Judge Thomas Jones,

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[1] Four months after, we find it was represented to the governor and council of Connecticut that "John Rapalye was lying in jail, destitute of clothing and necessaries of supplies, and desired to return to his family on Long Island to obtain them."

of Fort Neck, a gentleman of wealth and refinement, who had filled the high station of justice of the supreme court of the colony of New York, after the death of Judge Horsemanden, then residing at Flatbush. His high social and political position gave too much importance to his royalist sentiments, to allow their influence upon the population of Queens county to be overlooked. He had accordingly been arrested, and with many of the highest reputation for intelligence, wealth, and purity of moral character, had been immured in the county jail. He was now as destitute as John Rapalye himself; and permission was therefore granted the latter to procure clothing and sustenance for his fellow-prisoner. Evidences of Rapalye's faithful performance of his obligations were some time in the following December exhibited, in a draft for five hundred pounds, drawn by John Rapalye, and cashed in Norwich, the proceeds of which were distributed among his royalist friends in prison. This letter of credit performed a similar errand of mercy, being sent on to New York, where its acceptor paid its amount, to relieve the sufferings of the American prisoners then in confinement. In common with other exiled tories, John Rapalye was permitted to return home some months after the occupation of Long Island by the British, having been exchanged for such whig non-combatants as were held in durance by the enemy.

During the long period which elapsed while the British held possession of the Island, he exhibited such traits of humanity as entitle him to the highest consideration. Gen. Jeremiah Johnson says of him in his characteristically emphatic manner: "John Rapalye was an honest man, and one of the few who conscientiously adhered to

the crown. He was very humane to his whig neighbors, and to the prisoners on the ships, and did all he could to relieve their wants. Had he remained on the island after the evacuation by the British, he would not have lost his estate, as the legislature would have permitted him to retain it, on account of his humanity, and the kindness with which he treated the whigs after his return from exile, instead of revenging his own wrongs. This Christian gentleman again went into exile in 1783, and died in Nova Scotia."[1]

The proper disposition to be made of the loyalists of Long Island, became at length a subject not only of alarm but of great embarrassment to the Congress of New York. Most of the suspected had been imprisoned or banished, and the jails of the colonies were crowded with their leaders; yet the loyalty of the remaining inhabitants of the Island was still perverse and threatening. Great alarm was also felt by the provincial Congress, at the growing vindictiveness exhibited by the friends of those incarcerated and exiled. The distress of these persons, and of their families, aroused such a clamor that it portended a future harvest of revenge. Gouverneur Morris was therefore directed to communicate to Gen. Washington the particulars of the dilemma in which Congress found itself placed; but the great events then impending, and the more imminent dangers which threatened the commonwealth, crowded all minor affairs from attention.

To the chagrin of the more ardent whigs, it was now apparent, that while all the towns of Kings county, except

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[1] *Manuscript Recollections of the Revolution.*

Flatlands, assented to the demands of the provincial Congress, and elected delegates thereto, yet there still lingered, even in the minds of the very persons so chosen, either a chilling indifference or a strong aversion to the great objects contemplated by the revolutionists. The deputies from Kings county, in 1775, were Richard Stillwell, Theodorus Polhemus, John Lefferts, Nicolas Cowenhoven, Johannes E. Lott, John Vanderbilt, Henry Williams, and Jeremiah Remsen. Three of these gentlemen were not elected to the Congress of 1776; Messrs. Leffert Lefferts, Rutgert Van Brunt, and Jeremiah Vanderbilt, being chosen in their places.

As early as February 18th, 1776, the provincial Congress passed a resolution requesting the members from Kings county, who had been exceedingly irregular in their attendance upon its sittings, to appear in their place and resume their seats. Four of the eight delegates did accordingly participate in the labors and deliberations of that body, for a few sittings; but on the 16th of April, another election was held, at which, by a resolution adopted at the several town meetings, the eight delegates were empowered to *depute any one of their number to appear in Congress, and act for the whole.* While every member of that body from other counties of the colony exhibited the greatest zeal in the progress of revolutionary measures, there is scarcely a single project or motion on record, originating with the members from Kings county. It is not derogating from the worth or earnestness of these gentlemen to say that they undoubtedly reflected the exact sentiments of the great mass of their constituents; that their discernment taught them that the rule of Con-

gress could not long be maintained over the Island, and that after its abandonment by the Americans, the republican leaders must feel the wrath of the reinstated royal authorities.

The new provincial Congress of New York met May 14th; but, notwithstanding the proximity of the city where it was in session, and the easy representation by proxy, the journals show that during the next one hundred and thirty-six sessions, Kings county was not represented in more than five, by even one delegate. On the 14th of August, three months subsequently to his election, Mr. Polhemus appeared in his place, and declared that Kings county having elected no delegates since May last, the county committee had directed him to attend as a member, pursuant to an election of that date. Congress indulged the gentle patriotism of the county, by permitting Mr. Polhemus to represent it in their body, in everything except in matters relating to government. It will thus be seen that everywhere on Long Island, except in Suffolk county, either the most ardent loyalty to the crown, or the most languid attachment to revolutionary doctrines, still prevailed.

Several of the eleven persons elected to serve in the provincial Congress as delegates from Kings county, rendered eminent secret services to the Continental government during the long period of its occupation by British soldiers. Of these, none contributed more essential aid to the revolutionary cause than Leffert Lefferts, of Bedford. Possessed of wealth, and a cultivated mind, it would naturally have been expected of him to rank himself with the supporters of the royal government; yet, while he

acted during the British rule as an agent for the military authorities, it is evident that it was in the interest of his old neighbors, and with the design of protecting them from extortion and loss of property. When forced contributions of supplies, or a levy of forage, or of wagons and teams, were made by the British officers in command in Brooklyn, Mr. Lefferts was usually appointed to estimate the value of the subsidy; and the amount certified by him was paid to the contributors. The secret agents of Congress, who found access to Brooklyn through the enemy's lines, obtained large sums from Mr. Lefferts in aid of the revolution, for evidence of which he had often not even their individual receipt. The possession of such a document at that period was much better calculated to be productive of danger than of profit.

More than one of the delegates from Kings held commands in the militia, and were in service on Long Island until the retreat of the American army. Rutgert Van Brunt was Colonel, Nicholas Cowenhoven Lieutenant Colonel, and John Vanderbilt Major, of the Kings county militia. Jeremiah Vanderbilt, another delegate, was Captain of the Flatlands company; and the secretary of the county committee of safety, Abram Van Ranst, was Lieutenant in the Bushwick company. It is true that service in the militia did not in all cases indicate revolutionary fervor; as the enrolment was coercive, and these gentlemen, as well as all other citizens, had but to choose between performing duty in the ranks, or holding commands. Col. Nicholas Cowenhoven narrowly escaped being executed as a traitor and spy by Washington, a few weeks subsequently; and only by the most adroit trimming was he ena-

bled to avoid embroilment with one party or the other during the whole period of the war. We are in possession of a most lachrymose and penitential letter written by him to Governor Clinton towards the close of the war, when it became evident that the revolution would triumph. His adroitness, time serving, and subserviency, received its reward; for he throve in various functions during the British occupation; made his peace with his victorious countrymen, after the evacuation; profited by the necessities of his fellow citizens, when they came before him as a commissioner to settle their claims for damages suffered during the early days of the revolution; and died, full of honors, a magistrate of the county court.

The last act performed by the people of Kings county, which recognized the existence of a revolutionary government, until the evacuation of the Island by the British, more than seven years after, was the election of delegates to the provincial Congress, on the 19th of August; while twenty-three thousand of the enemy's troops were forming on the shore of Staten Island for embarkation in boats, to cross the bay, and land upon Long Island. Three days subsequently, the towns of New Utrecht and Gravesend were swarming with the invader's forces; and the imminence of the danger tended neither to add vigor to the patriotism of the despairing whigs, nor to weaken the loyalty of the exultant tories.

The directions of Congress to the several towns, to instruct their delegates to form a new State Government, in accordance with the recent Declaration of Independence, were disregarded; and the election of deputies was therefore declared void, and the farce of representation in the provincial Congress by the people of Kings county, contrary

to their desire, was at an end. There were not wanting, however, those who were revolutionists from principle, and who joined so heartily in measures which forwarded the designs of Congress that subsequent accommodation with the British became impossible.

Abram Van Ranst, clerk of the county conventions that met to appoint delegates to Congress, was an ardent whig, and suffered in person and property for his patriotism. He was the proprietor of one of the pleasant farms of rich land which were allotted to the original colonists, near the Bushwick church. His warm Dutch farm-house was occupied during the revolution as the headquarters of Col. McPherson, the commander of a band of refugees, who were termed the corps of guides and spies. A company of more abandoned wretches, it is probable, was not created by the disorders of a period so prolific of inhuman and bloodthirsty men.[1] Captain Van Ranst could hardly have been present at the battle and siege of Brooklyn, as one of the Connecticut newspapers of the day narrates that he arrived at Harlaem on the 27th of August, with his family, in a boat.[2] Bushwick creek, then a navigable tide

[1] "After the revolution, when the asperity with which the contest between the whigs and tories had somewhat abated, several of the officers of the corps of guides and spies returned to Long Island. One of these, named Vincent, who ventured back the year succeeding the war, was arrested at Albany in 1784, on the charge of setting fire to some part of the city. He was tried for arson, convicted and hung, within so short an interval succeeding his arrest, that it would greatly shock the legal fraternity at this day by its unseemly haste. There were others of the gang who deserved a like fate, but escaped."—*Manuscript Journal of Gen. Johnson.*

[2] On his arrival at the camp in Harlaem, Captain Van Ranst, reported that information had been received that fifteen hundred British troops had surrounded the house of Simon Duryea on the Bushwick lane (a mile north of the present Evergreen Cemetery) and seized his horses, wagons and arms, and that two companies of militia had been disarmed and perhaps taken prisoners.

stream, flowed almost to his door, and afforded him a ready means of securing his flight. He remained an exile from his home for seven years.

Barent Johnson, Captain of the Brooklyn company, and afterward Major in the Continental service, also accompanied the American army in the long series of disastrous retreats which followed its abandonment of the Island. He fought at Harlaem and White plains; and at last, broken in health, he made his accommodation with the British, and returned to his home in Brooklyn, only to linger a year or two, when he died. During this brief period, his house was the rendezvous of the secret agents of the Americans, who traversed the island constantly, both as spies and as collectors of the funds loaned to the State. These persons were often hidden in his house at the Wallabout, while it was the quarters of British officers and troops. The sums loaned to the revolutionary agents, by Major Johnson, and taken by them through the British lines in safety, amounted to more than five thousand dollars.

A stout-hearted partisan of the whigs, named Adolph Waldron, at this period of our narrative, held the lease of the *Brookland ferry*, at the foot of Fulton street, from the corporation of New York. He was also the landlord of the inn near the landing; which, during the revolution, became noted for the British sports of bull-baiting and prize-fighting, under the tory landlord, Charles Loosely. One of the first to feel the stir of revolutionary disquiet, Waldron had, in September 1775, called a meeting at his inn of those citizens who were desirous of forming a military organization. Waldron, as its patron, was in the

regular order which governs such popular assemblies elected chairman of the meeting; and as it is probable that it consisted largely of his old confrères, and patrons of his bar, he was, with due formality, chosen Captain of the troop of horse which the assembly of citizens determined should be organized. The stout innkeeper proved a good officer, and his troop of light horse was employed by Gen. Sterling in guarding the coast of New Utrecht and Gravesend, until relieved by Col. Hand's regiment of riflemen. His energetic patriotism, combined with his ambition for military honors, was not indulged by Captain Waldron without heavy cost; for he was compelled to abandon his ferry, his snug tavern, and even his troop horse, and remain in exile at Preakness in New Jersey during the war. Whether his narrow escape from the pursuing dragoons of Delancey, in his flight across the Sound at Huntington, had cooled his zeal, or whether he found no opportunity of recovering his rank in a cavalry company, neither history nor tradition inform us. It is probable that the loud remonstrances of the blatant Loosely, whose inn, kept in the Corporation house, was often the scene of high carousal by the British officers, with whom he doubtless acquired a sort of influence, operated greatly against any accommodation with the British authorities, if Waldron desired to make it.[1]

Another cavalry company, entitled the Kings county troop, was organized at the village of Bedford. The com-

[1] Capt. Waldron's shrewdness enabled him to reimburse some portion of his losses on his return to Brooklyn in 1783. The winter was terribly severe, and the sufferings of the inhabitants of New York for want of fuel were dreadful. The wasteful extravagance of the British soldiers, had, in

mander, Lambert Suydam, deserves something more at our hands than the simple statement of his rank, both on account of his merits, his eccentricities, and his adventures. He was a brave little Dutch farmer, whose compact frame, possessing dimensions more remarkable for breadth than for height, scarcely entitled him to fill the popular ideal of a gallant cavalry officer. He was of a fiery, resolute character, that permitted neither insult to his dignity, nor encroachment upon his rights; and, altogether, was of such a petulant, high-spirited, and honorable disposition, as would have delighted the soul of Petrus Stuyvesant, or the imagination of Washington Irving. His troop swept the Clove road to Flatbush, and the Bedford road to Jamaica, patrolling them night and day to discover traces of the enemy's advance. It was the great pride of this stout little Dutch Captain, to mount his great farm horse, and place himself with all the despotic authority of military discipline at the head of his troopers, marshalled in line before his door, and then push out upon one of his daily excursions, to scour the king's highway for any of the king's emissaries who should intrude upon it. Capt. Suydam accompanied Gen. Woodhull in his last foray on the fat beeves of the farmers of Flatlands and Jamaica, his troopers sweeping them up with the rigor if not with the spirit of the Scotch borderers, and crowding them up

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seven years, swept almost every tree from the tall forests of Brooklyn and Bostwick. Fire wood had in consequence become so scarce and dear, that the price rose to sums almost fabulous. Capt. Waldron seized his advantage as proprietor of the ferry, and purchased all the wood brought there by the farmers, freighted his boats with the precious commodity, and sold it in the city at prices which he had the power to fix, almost without limit.—*Manuscript Journal of Gen. Johnson.*

in great droves towards the Hempstead plains. It was among the last military orders of the noble President of the provincial Congress to detach Capt. Suydam from his guard at Jamaica on the day of the battle, and send him on to the east. The grand self-devotion of the General, would not permit any other officer to share the danger he knew to be so closely impending over himself. Capt. Suydam pushed on to unite his troop to the command of Col. Livingston; but he was met near Hempstead by Col. Gilbert Potter, who commanded a regiment of Suffolk county militia, and who, under the influence of the panic that fell on all the troops of Congress at the terrible defeat on the 27th of August, ordered the Captain to leave the Island.[1] Here, struck with a seeming paralysis of reason, Capt. Suydam committed the error of permitting his troop to abandon their horses, and pass over the Sound to Westchester. The prominence which the Captain's exploits had given him, permitted but little hope to be indulged by his friends that the British would allow him to return to his home, without some sharp reminder of his cattle-raiding offences; and, as Washington could neither mount a troop nor provide forage for the horses, had it been possible to obtain them, Capt. Suydam, and numbers of his company, were left with very narrow resources. They were represented to the Convention in October as being in a destitute condition, and that body accordingly voted them their pay as if in actual service.

Whether Capt. Suydam, on account of his familiarity with the island, acted as a spy for Washington, or whether

[1] For a report of his service on the island, see his letter, Document XII.

under the influence of his adventurous spirit, he visited it for the gratification of meeting his family, is unknown; but he more than once performed the hazardous exploit of rowing across the Sound in the night, and stealing through the thickets and swamps to his house in Bedford. Here the presence of a number of British soldiers, who were quartered in the kitchen, rendered the greatest caution necessary; but the answer to a well known signal always assured him of danger or security, as he approached the low window by which he was admitted. On one occasion he was in imminent hazard of detection and arrest. He had approached the house with his usual caution, and was enjoying the warm greetings of his family with a zest enhanced by the dangers through which it had been purchased, when his presence was suspected by some person, who communicated the intelligence to the soldiers at the nearest guard-house. A squad of the enemy soon encompassed the house, and a guard was just entering the door, when the earnest entreaties of Mrs. Suydam overcame the tender hearted sergeant, and a pause ensued, while he gave such orders as left a gap in the enclosing lines. Of this the fugitive speedily availed himself, and in the darkness was soon beyond the reach of pursuit. The quick arraignment, the speedy trial, the ignominious death of a spy awaited him, and the morning would have beheld him suspended from one of the trees in front of his own house.[1]

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[1] The dangers he had undergone had not, however, tamed his valiant spirit to that degree which permitted him to suffer without resentment the indignities and outrages daily perpetrated by the British soldiers on his neighbors. One morning an unwonted clamor in his barnyard aroused the captain from his slumbers, and creeping to the window of his bedroom, he became assured in a short time that the marauders were at some nefarious

After nearly a year spent in exile, Capt. Suydam was permitted to return home, on taking the oath of submission.

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work among his cattle. The dim light of early morning was rendered still more obscure by a thin fog, which, however, did not prevent him from observing unusual objects moving in the cattle-yard. The irate trooper was not deterred from the protection of his property by the hazard of his own delicate position as a prisoner on parole, for there was little disposition in his resolute soul to submit tamely to outrages upon his person or his goods. Reckless of the consequences, he seized his musket, already loaded with a heavy charge of buckshot, and fired it in the direction of the sounds which had attracted his attention. The groans, and screams of agony, which ensued, sufficiently indicated the effect of his shot; and when, a few minutes subsequently, the morning light broke through the mist, it was discovered that three British soldiers, who had slaughtered one of the captain's cows, and were then engaged in removing the skin, had all been wounded by the shot. As soon as information of the occurrence reached the adjacent camp, a squad of soldiers was sent to carry away the wounded men, one of whom soon after died. No notice of the affair was ever taken by the British authorities, nor was Capt. Suydam ever molested. There was always underlying in the character of most of the British officers, when its influence was not deadened by the paralyzing effect of what they deemed duty to the king, a great liking for fair play, which kept them silent to severe measures taken by the whigs for the protection of their property.

CHAPTER IV.

The Invasion.

The siege of Boston had enclosed the British army, intended to reduce the rebellious colonies to submission, upon a narrow peninsula; and, beyond the range of cannon-shot from the ships of war, no operations for that purpose were there possible. Lord Howe, and his brother Gen. William Howe, trained in the best school of European warfare, were not long in perceiving that even a victory upon the distant coast-line of New England, would not be decisive of the contest. Indeed, the conquest of all the Eastern colonies, then insurgent, would only be cutting off a limb. It was necessary to strike at the vitals. The occupation of New York, and the command of the Hudson, would separate the spinal column of the confederacy, and paralyze, if it did not destroy, its vitality. The British army now occupied a territory entirely populated by its bitter enemies, while unquestionable intelligence from New York convinced the Howes that the citizens of that colony were as firmly devoted to the royal interests. Every inducement which policy would dictate, as well as the urgent invitations of these citizens, combined, therefore, to fix them in their purpose to change their base of operations thither. The plan of the campaign, adopted by the Admiral and the General, exhibited at once military talent, of more than ordinary excellence, and resources

adequate to the work in hand. The undisguised loyalty of the inhabitants of Staten Island, and the exposure of almost its entire surface to the sweep of the guns of the British fleet, made it eminently fit for the rendezvous of the great force it was designed to assemble. It is difficult at this day to account for the removal, by Gen. Howe, of all the Boston garrison to Halifax, when the descent upon Long Island had been determined upon, and was so easy of accomplishment. It was made a subject of violent animadversion by the British writers that he should have compelled the heroic troops, who had so long endured the bombardment of the American artillery from the heights of Roxbury and Dorchester, with the confinement and exhaustion of a close investment in the crowded streets of Boston, to subject themselves to the enervating voyages in sailing to and from Halifax. These needless sufferings they were compelled to undergo, instead of recruiting in the genial climate, and feasting upon the abundant resources, of Long Island.[1] It was said in the high circles of Grub street, and echoed on the floor of the House of Commons that "the fields of that rich island were thronged with bounteous supplies of vegetables and fruits, so that the army, encamped in tents, or hutted, after the fashion of the rebels, would have recruited soon enough to have entered upon the campaign early in the season."

But before the view of General Howe seems to have always risen the awful vision of Bunker Hill, and every military movement of his after life goes to prove that on that scene he could never close his startled eyes. No pro-

[1] View of the evidence relative to the conduct of the American war, London, 1779.— Document 43.

mise of success could be so dazzling as to overcome his decision never to risk a movement, in the presence of his rebel foes, until every provision had been exhausted for making it secure, which his prudence anticipated, and his resources supplied.

On the 11th of June, 1776, the fleet which had borne his troops from the harbor of Boston a few weeks previously, sailed from Halifax, renewed hopes, and recruited strength, arming the forces for battle even more than their vast supply of munitions of war. The morning of the twenty-ninth of that month dawned upon the fleet, in sight of Sandy Hook; and here it was joined by Gen. Howe in person, who had preceded the main body of the fleet several days, during which he had remained on board his vessel, in consultation with Governor Tryon. The gubernatorial functions of this gentleman, as we have seen, had, by the perversity of the American subjects of his vice-royalty, been confined to the cabin of the Asia man-of-war.

From Gov. Tryon, Howe ascertained that the Americans had obtained information of his designs; as their vigorous preparations for resistance, both in New York and on Long Island, fully exhibited. From the testimony of spies, and loyal inhabitants of Brooklyn and New York, it was evident that in the interim of three months, since the evacuation of Boston, the Americans had not been idle. The sagacious comprehension of Washington had long divined the direction of the next blow of the enemy, and all his powers had been concentrated to shield the threatened point from its deadly force. The most alarming apprehensions had been felt that the fleet would sail at once into the East River, and thus enable Gen. Howe to

bivouac his army in another day upon Brooklyn heights. To guard against this imminent danger, every energy had been bent upon the obstruction of the two channels which communicated with the Bay. *Chevaux-de-Frise*, of sharpened timbers projecting from vessels firmly anchored, stretched across the one between Governor's Island and the Battery, while sunken hulks between them added to the difficulties of the passage. Heavy batteries, of the largest guns, at either end of this obstruction, guarded it from the approach of the enemy's ships; while the other channel, between Governor's Island and the Brooklyn shore, in which also vessels had been sunk, was swept by the plunging fire of great guns on the heights of Brooklyn, and by the hulling shot from the water-batteries of Red hook and Governor's Island. It was felt by all that there remained scarcely a possibility that the passage could be forced, by vessels exposed to such a tornado of shot and shell as would be hurled upon them in the attempt.

Happily for the Americans, this opinion concerning the impassable nature of the obstructions was shared by the British commanders. It is a difficult problem for us to solve, however, why the attempt was not made; nor is it easy to comprehend the grounds of the apprehension entertained by the British, since the obstacles interposed appear to us too feeble for the detention of such a powerful fleet for a single hour. But, from the shores of Long Island, on the 29th of June, the vast fleet of the invaders was descried entering the lower harbor. There was no longer room for doubt regarding its destination; and, while a thousand hearts palpitated with quickened motion at the

approaching peril, thrice the number, in the bosoms of the Island inhabitants, throbbed with joy at the sight of the same object, which to them promised rescue from a galling usurpation. The fleet was not long without indications of the hostile feelings with which it was regarded by the one party, or of the friendly sentiments of the other.

An incident, which exhibited to Gen. Howe the fierce earnestness with which the Americans had entered upon the contest, occurred on the 29th of June, while the fleet was making the mouth of the harbor. An armed American vessel was discovered near Cape May, and pursuit of her, by the tenders and boats, was at once ordered. The vessel proved to be the brig Nancy, armed with six three-pounders, and loaded with the spoils of New Providence, gunpowder, firelocks, sugar and rum. The presence of six men-of-war, with numbers of armed tenders, determined her commander in the resolution to beach his vessel, and save what he could of her cargo. Under cover of a heavy fog, the brig was run ashore; but, while much of the gunpowder remained on board, the fog lifted, and the fleet was observed at a short distance, with the men-of-war boats preparing to board her. A train was laid to the magazine; the mainsail was rolled on deck, with powder in its folds, and fired. The British seamen boarded their prize with three cheers, which had scarcely announced their success to their comrades in the fleet, when the deck of the brig rose with a loud explosion, and the horrible spectacle was exhibited of thirty or forty human beings torn and crushed to death in an instant.

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[1] *American Archives*, I, fifth series, p. 14.

On the fourth of July, as if to celebrate the great event which was then occurring in Philadelphia, a number of hardy Americans constructed a battery, mounting at most no more than two or three twelve-pounders, at the Narrows, near Denyse's ferry-landing. During the day, they opened fire upon the Asia, which was sailing close to shore, in the rear of the fleet. As if stung by the audacity of this assault, the great ship wore heavily around, and sent a broadside of forty twenty-four pound shot upon the shore. One of the accounts of occurrences of the day, published in a Philadelphia newspaper, says: "One of the balls lodged in the wall of Mr. Bennett's house without penetrating it. The house of Denyse Denyse narrowly escaped demolition, from the storm of cannon shot which swept around it. One passed close to the kitchen, in which the family were assembled, another struck the barn at a short distance, and a third carried away a large portion of the garden fence, close to the back door of the house." The battery continued its discharges, until one of its shot hulled the Asia, killing, it is said, four men and a boy.[1] Thus, the first resistance made to the British forces in the colony of New York, was on the fourth of July, from the ground on which Fort Hamilton is built, and while the Declaration of Independence was receiving the signatures of the fifty-six immortal representatives who framed it.[2]

Gen. Howe gave indications of an intention to attack the American lines as early as the 7th of July, immediately

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[1] Reported by one Abram Van Dugan, then a prisoner on board the Asia,

[2] "I had determined to disembark the army at Gravesend bay in Long Island, and with this intention, the fleet moved up the bay on the 1st instant in the evening, in order to land the troops at the break of day next morning; but being more particularly informed during the night of *a strong*

after his fleet had anchored. His letter to Lord Germaine, announcing his arrival, furnishes such proofs of the constant transmission of intelligence to him by his spies, and of the uncertainty of his mind, that it will repay perusal. On the 1st of July, orders had been issued for the disembarkation of the troops at Gravesend bay, early the next morning; but the arrival of some spies during the night, with a description of the strong American entrenchments, caused him to countermand the orders.

The fleet assembled in the lower bay was that which had borne the besieged forces of Great Britain from Boston to Halifax, and now contained nine thousand veteran soldiers; who were, on the ninth of July, landed on the shore of Staten Island. The landing of the troops was effected by the aid of more than twenty of the large hay-boats, which had escaped Captain Benjamin Birdsall's raid. As soon as the fleet had anchored, these came out of the creeks and the little bays which intersected the Long Island shore, and were of great service in supplying the British vessels with fresh provisions, and in transporting the troops to Staten Island. The strongest assurances were given to the Howes of the fervent loyalty of the great mass of the inhabitants of Long Island; and this till now subdued attachment to the crown was relied upon as one of the chief auxiliaries that would aid to make success a certainty.

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post upon a ridge of *craggy heights* covered with wood that lay in the route the army must have taken, only two miles distant from the enemy's works, and seven from Gravesend.... I declined the undertaking."

Gen. Howe to Lord Germaine.

July 7th, 1776.

See the entire letter in Document 8.

In a few days another fleet, repulsed from the siege of Charleston, bore the remnant of the forces under Sir Henry Clinton and Sir Peter Parker into the harbor. The shattered masts and the pierced hulls of Sir Peter's squadron, testified to the fierce resistance they had encountered from the guns of Fort Moultrie. Two fifty-gun ships, five frigates of twenty-eight, one of twenty-six, and two sloops of eight guns each, had expended, in two hours fighting, thirty-four thousand pounds of powder, and more than fifty tons of shot; by which they had killed and wounded of the Americans thirty-six men, having in the same time lost one hundred and seventy men, and one of the twenty-eight gun frigates. It was under such disheartening influences that the Admiral brought his fleet, of nine vessels of war and thirty-five transports, carrying Sir Henry Clinton's force of three thousand men, into the harbor of New York.[1]

From this period, every day witnessed the arrival of reinforcements, gathered, by the order of the king of Great Britain, from every quarter of the globe. The fleet which had hovered off the coast of Florida, the vessels which had thronged the harbor of Jamaica, directed their course, as by some vast magnetic attraction, towards the low shores of Long Island. From the hills of Brooklyn, the anxious gazer could one day descry a fleet of tall ships from the Mediterranean, standing up the wide estuary of New York bay; and the morning of the next would dawn upon another, from the British channel, convoying a hundred transport ships to the same port. On the twelfth of August arrived

[1] *Moultrie's Memoirs American Revolution; Drayton's do.*

the last division of the great fleet of the invaders. Six men-of-war, and eighty two transport-ships, bearing seven thousand eight hundred Hessian mercenaries, and one thousand English Guards, who had been driven about upon the face of the deep for thirteen weeks, entered the harbor on this day, and anchored below the Narrows. The commander of the foreign troops was General De Heister; an old man, worn out with half a century of military service, but a personal friend of the landgrave of Hesse Cassel, at whose earnest entreaty he had consented to accept the command.[1]

Although nearly all the cattle had been swept from the rich farms of Staten Island a month before, by Col. Heard, it still seemed like a paradise to the troops after their terrible voyage. The light-armed Highlander, and the cum-

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[1] "The passage had been very tedious, for calms, contrary winds, and currents, drove the fleet in such adverse directions as baffled every reckoning, though kept by the ablest artists. The old General De Heister, who was embarked on board of a merchant ship, exhausted his whole stock of tobacco and patience together. He wrote a letter, couched in terms of grief, impatience and despair. 'I have been imposed upon and deceived,' said the old veteran, 'for I was assured the voyage would not exceed six or seven weeks—it is now more than fourteen since I embarked, and full three months since I left England, yet I see no more prospect of landing, than I did a week after our sailing. I am an old man covered with wounds, and imbecilitated by age and fatigue, and it is impossible I should survive if the voyage continues much longer.'

Sir George Collier went on board the transport, to visit and comfort the old general; and to do it more effectually than by words, he carried with him refreshments, fresh provisions, etc., but, above all, plenty of tobacco, which he learned was one principal cause of the veteran's dejection. This, and an assurance that the voyage would now soon terminate, raised the old German's spirits very effectually. He ordered his band of music to play—he called for old Hock, and swallowed large potations to the health of the king of England, the landgrave, and many other friends, and Sir George left him perfectly exhilarated and happy."—*Naval Chronicle*, 1814, *article, Detail of some particular services of Sir George Collier in America, by George Rainer. Document* 35.

brously equipped Hessian, overburdened with the weight of his own weapons, leaped joyously upon the shore, and looked forward to a brief campaign, which would fill their knapsacks with booty, and their stomachs with unaccustomed luxuries. Twenty-seven thousand men[1] landed from the transports, and bivouacked in sight of the doomed city, which they were rejoicing in the anticipation of sacking. Eleven thousand of these were Hessian and Waldeckian troops. The British army was received with the wildest demonstrations of joy by the inhabitants; and the deputations of loyalists from Long Island were not behind in expressions of their profound gratification at the presence of the vast force, which incontestibly guarantied the permanence of the royal government in America.[2]

Most of the troops were disembarked immediately on their arrival; the Hessians forming a separate camp on the shore of Kill Van Kull, where, with abundant supplies of fresh provisions, they soon recovered from the fatigues of their voyage. They were not permitted, however, to enjoy an undisturbed repose. The American riflemen thronged the opposite shore of New Jersey,[3] with eager curiosity to learn something of these foreign soldiers, of whose dreadful ferocity and barbarous warfare the wildest stories had been reported. Unfortunately for the simple

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[1] In *Knight's Pictorial History of England* the number of English and foreign troops is said to be nearly thirty thousand. Document 41.

Elking says, "General Howe had at this time thirty-five thousand active troops at his disposal."— *Hist. of German Auxiliaries in America.* Document 40.

[2] *Marshall's Life of Washington.* Quarto edition, II, 410.

[3] The Journal of a Hessian officer says: "The Americans could be seen across the water, stretching out their long necks to see what sort of people we were." Document 40.

and credulous Germans, curiosity did not long keep the American sharpshooters idle; for an occasional puff of smoke from a clump of bushes far across the Kill, and the immediately succeeding fall of one of the Hessian sentinels on the shore, warned them that these curious spectators were active enemies. To the astonishment of the auxiliaries, they learned that even the broad strait between them and their foe was not sufficient to protect their encampment; and it was only by sweeping the Jersey shore with cannon and grape-shot, that this was rendered safe. While the troops were recruiting, Gen. Howe was engaged in forming his plan of the campaign, and in selecting and arranging his forces for the first blow, which he was determined should be overwhelming.[1]

The commanders of the fleet and army had been selected by the king himself; and his choice had been approved by statesmen thoroughly conversant with the great exigencies of the campaign, and with the talents of the persons so highly honored.

The history of combined expeditions had hitherto been usually one of misfortune, if not of criminality, as the jealousy, which seldom slumbered between the land and naval forces, exerted its malignant influence upon the respective commanders. But this danger, it was believed, and experience proved, was effectually guarded against by the ap-

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[1] The loyalists who reached Howe's camp, were at this time formed into two companies, styled New York Provincials. "A negro belonging to one Strickler at Gravesend was taken prisoner (as he says) last Sunday at Coney Island (by the British). Yesterday he made his escape, and was taken prisoner by our rifle guard. He reports eight hundred negroes collected on Staten Island this day to be formed into regiments."— *Gen. Greene to Washington, July 21st.*

pointment of Admiral Lord Richard Howe, and his brother General William Howe. They had both given proof of their valor and skill, on the ocean and on the battle-field. Yet their fraternal affection, and their common courage, were the only points of similarity in their characters.

The elder brother Richard, Admiral and Viscount, was a grave, proud man, animated by a noble ambition, that was modified by a humane and generous spirit. In his devotion to the king, he held the rebellious Americans in profound abhorrence; yet his intercourse with them was characterized by a forbearance and gentleness which had the seeming of inconsistency to those who did not justly estimate the mingled sentiments which animated a royalist, jealous of the honor of his king, and a nobleman, sensitive to appeals to his justice and his humanity. The proud reserve of his manner, towards those of an inferior rank, did not always extend to those with whom he was on terms of friendship. He had lived in the most cordial intimacy with Dr. Franklin; and he had received a letter from him, on the 30th ult., containing the bitterest expression of sentiments hostile to the British government, and insulting to himself, with the mild remark: "My old friend expresses himself very warmly." At the interview with Col. Palfrey on board his flag-ship, he spoke of General Washington with the highest respect; giving him, in conversation, his military title, although he could not, as his majesty's officer, address him by it in his communications. He spoke of the revolted colonies as *States;* and referred to the resolutions of Congress which honored the memory of his brother, who had fallen eighteen years before at Ticonderoga, with expressions of sentiments of the greatest

regard for this testimony to the memory of a member of his family. On parting with the Colonel, he desired him to present his compliments to *General* Washington; and when speaking of the brother who had fallen in defense of the colonists, whom his lordship had come to meet as an enemy, Col. Palfrey observed that he was so much affected that tears came to his eyes.[1]

Such was the man who commanded the great armada which now made the harbor of New York seem a forest of masts. Had he never appeared as an enemy of the republic, his name would have been received by its citizens with tokens of honor and admiration, for the dignity, moderation, and humanity of his mind. As a generous enemy, a faithful subject of his king, and a Christian gentleman, let us do him honor.

Widely different, in many respects, was the character of his brother, the Chevalier as he was termed, who had acquired distinctions by his service on the battle-field, nearly equal to those which his Lordship had obtained upon the ocean. His reputation for experience in the art of war, and for ability as a soldier, was equal to that of any General in the British service. He had maintained the honor of the British flag on more than one battle field of America, during the French war of 1756. But while Admiral Howe was remarkable for sobriety and abstemiousness, the General was noted for self-indulgence and sensuality. The former was haughty and reserved, even to his friends; the latter was familiar and affable, even to those whom he held in contempt. The life of the Viscount was pure and

[1] *Sparks's Life of Washington.*

honorable, while that of the General was largely spent in gaming and debauchery. The ambition of Admiral Howe kept him active and watchful; that of his brother was subject to intermissions, during which wantonness and sloth neutralized the efforts of his genius.

He had acquired his high position of Commander-in-chief of the army in America, not entirely from his reputation for military ability, but also through the personal favor of the king, to whom his features bore such an extraordinary resemblance as to give color to the popular scandal of their common paternity. With the tactical talent of a skilful general, he combined the feeble results of a timid and unpracticed soldier. His ambition spurred him to exercise an intellect capable of great military invention, and of splendid combinations; but his sensuality lulled him into indolence, at the very moment when his schemes promised to ripen into success. He prepared the plans of his campaigns with elaborate care, and shrewd foresight; but he lost his interest in their realization the instant their success appeared probable; and he abandoned their final execution with the most reckless unconcern at the very moment of their culmination, when exertion was most necessary to their accomplishment. He was accompanied on this occasion, it is charged, by his mistress, Mrs. Loring, the wife of a resident of Boston whose complaisance had been purchased with an office, the emoluments of which were rated at thirty thousand dollars per annum.[1] The gaming table found Gen. Howe and his paramour in

[1] *View of the Conduct of the War in America.* 8vo, London, 1777. Document 43.

almost nightly attendance; and the latter was asserted, by the writers of letters from the camp, to have lost three hundred guineas at a single sitting. The foibles and the vices of the Commander did not, however, destroy the affection and esteem of his army; for his affability and kindness of manner won for him the first, while his ability and courage secured to him the other.

Such were the men, who wielded the power of the armies of Great Britain, and her German auxiliaries, in America.

Having thus minutely traced the steps by which the great invading force had been brought to our shores, and the measures by which the revolutionary authorities had sought to stifle where they could not destroy the affection for royalty among the colonists of Long Island, it is time to notice the preparations of these authorities for the defense of their new Government.

Suffolk county had early given evidence of its hearty zeal for the republican doctrines. Out of its whole population of freeholders and adult male inhabitants, numbering two thousand eight hundred and thirty-four, between the ages of sixteen and sixty, only two hundred and thirty-six were reckoned as being of loyalist proclivities. The enrolled militia of the county exceeded two thousand; of whom three hundred and ninety-three officers and privates were in the ranks of Col. Smith's regiment, the best disciplined and armed on the island. It was the only one which could be considered in any form to have survived the shock of the 27th of August; and only a small part, even of this body, ever did service after that fatal day. In Queens county, as we have seen, the whole force

of the whigs which could be mustered under arms was insufficient to overawe their loyalist neighbors. Seventeen hundred and seventy able bodied men among her citizens were enrolled on the *roster* of her militia; while only three hundred and seventy-nine were, by the most stringent measures, induced to appear in arms.[1]

In Kings county six companies of militia were organized, but with what numerical strength we have no means of learning. From many suggestive circumstances, however, the conviction is forced upon us that the ranks must have been very thin, and the companies scarcely more than skeleton organizations. Two companies of volunteer cavalry had been formed, as already narrated, which were frequently employed on patrol and guard duty, in which they proved of some service.

On the 27th of June, Col. Van Brunt, of New Utrecht, had delivered fifty-eight men, under the command of Captain Jaques Rapalye, to the provincial Congress of New York, as the quota of Kings county under the last draft.

Early in March, the regiment of Col. Ward, numbering five hundred and nineteen men, was engaged, under the direction of Gen. Greene as engineer, in forming a line of defenses to protect the shore of the East River from approach by land. On the thirteenth of that month, Lord Stirling issued orders that all the male inhabitants of Kings county, both white and black, should perform

[1] This is the number, for whom Col. Sands received bounty money, amounting to £617 14*s.* 8*d.* The demand for that sum would not, however, be deemed at this day conclusive evidence of the actual service of even that small number. For evidence of the vastly different spirit in which the requisition of Gov. Tryon to the inhabitants of the Island to appear in arms was received, see his letter, in appendix 2.

fatigue duty on the entrenchments, one-half being required to labor thereon each alternate day. The fortifications, and works of defense, were now driven forward with the greatest celerity which the means of the Americans allowed. Royalist and whig toiled side by side; compelled, by the stringency of military rule, to appear with the implements they employed in the peaceful labors of agriculture. The lines which defended the peninsula, upon which the two villages of Brooklyn-church and Brooklyn-ferry were erected, were, however, more imposing in appearance, than formidable for resistance.

In consequence of the deep indenture of the land, by Gowanus creek and the mill-ponds connected with it on the south, and by Wallabout bay and Remsen's mill-pond, then covering the site of City Park, on the north,—a water front of more than three miles was guarded by a line of entrenchments less than a mile and a half in extent. The low ground on the Wallabout was defended by a wide ditch, filled by the tide, the channel having been excavated from the head of Wallabout creek, near the junction of Raymond and Tillary streets, to the foot of the heights, near Bolivar street. Its course followed the low ground between Raymond and Navy streets, through which the water falling on the adjacent hills was drained.[1] The earth from the ditch was formed into a breastwork, *fraised* with sharp stakes, set firmly into the bank, crossing each other, and projecting forward at an angle which would bring their points to the level of the breast of the assailant. From the east end of the ditch, a breastwork,

[1] *Manuscript Recollections of Gen. Johnson.*

similarly defended, led up the face of the hill to Fort Putnam, on the site of Washington Park. The strong redoubt known by this name, was an earthwork, defended by a ditch, and a broad area of *abatis* in front, formed of the tall forest trees which, until that time, had covered the site. The woods had extended down the slope, as far as the present junction of Clinton and Flatbush avenues on the west, and almost to the Jamaica road on the south; but they were now felled, over many acres, with their tops pointing outwards, and presented a tangled mass of sharpened branches, interwoven with the brushwood, that rendered the passage of a body of troops nearly impossible.

Fort Putnam mounted five heavy guns, and occupied a height extending south of De Kalb avenue, commanding the Wallabout bridge road, Fort Greene lane, and most of the low ground in front as far as Grand avenue. It was, however, unfortunately overlooked by an eminence, distant about six hundred yards to the south-east, near the crossing of Clinton and De Kalb avenues; and the importance of this superiority was not overlooked by the British. This hill was too far from the defensible line, to be occupied as an exterior redoubt, or to be included within the entrenchments.[1]

From Fort Putnam the earthworks extended, in a zig-zag line, across the high ground near Bond street and Fulton avenue, to Fort Greene, situated on the land of Johannes De Bevoise and Van Brunt, near the brow of the hill at the intersection of Nevins and Dean streets, and

[1] It is probable also that its superior eminence was not discovered until the woods which intervened had been felled for the line of *abatis*.

nearly equidistant from Freeke's mill pond and Fort Putnam.

Half way between Forts Greene and Putnam, on the land of John Jackson, near the crossing of De Bevoise street and De Kalb avenue, a small redoubt was constructed to defend a salient angle in the lines. The star-forts, Putnam and Greene, projected far enough beyond the lines to defend them, by sweeping the whole length of the ditch between with the fire of their guns. The trunks of the heavy native forest trees, which had been felled to form the *abatis*, had been split into stakes, which now faced the embankments of the redoubts, and the ditches, with fraise-work. Detachments of the militia, and the fatigue parties, were also employed in cutting alder saplings from the adjacent bogs, and in hauling them to the entrenchments, to be used for the same purpose.[1]

Although the pickets and stakes were furnished gratuitously, in most cases, by the farmers of Brooklyn, on whose land the wood had grown, yet there were not wanting instances of the presentation of claims for remuneration after the peace; and these thrifty patriots were paid for supplying the means for defending their own homes. Congress had requested the Kings county committee of safety to supply Col. Ward with brush for fascines and wood for pickets, and with other timber to be used in the works around Brooklyn; and for this material, there

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[1] The recent discovery in Brunswick of a minute and accurate map of the American lines, and of the position of the British forces, drawn by a Hessian officer, is very opportune for the elucidation of many points hitherto doubtful in the history of events connected with the defense of Brooklyn. The original is in the possession of the writer; and the fac-simile, presented in this volume, will be found worthy of study.

were some of its citizens mercenary enough to demand and receive compensation.

South of Freeke's mill-pond, on a low sand hill overlooking the passage between Freeke's and Denton's mill ponds,—where the Porte road, after crossing the dam of the former to the west side of the pond, formed a curve of nearly half the circumference of the knoll,—a redoubt, mounting four guns, had been constructed to command the crossing. This hill, after the destruction of the redoubt by the British had rendered the site of the fortification doubtful, was known as Fort Boerum; but at this period it was called Fort Box, in honor, probably, of Major Box, the officer who commanded at that part of the lines.[1]

The fifth and last in the chain of redoubts was the earthwork called Fort Defiance, on Red Hook, the guns of which, as will be narrated, offered a stout resistance to the passage of the British frigate, Roebuck, during the progress of the battle. It mounted *en barbette* four eighteen-pounders, and was expected to prove a formidable obstacle to the passage of the British fleet up the East River.

Red Hook had early been deemed an important point of resistance; and on the fifteenth of April, a regiment of troops had been sent from New York to construct a redoubt upon it. In the Journal of Samuel Shaw an account of this redoubt is contained, not devoid of interest to us:

"June 11, 1776. I am now stationed at Red Hook, about four miles from New York. It is an island[2] situated so as to command the entrance of the harbor entirely, where we

[1] Mr. Lossing placed this fort too far south, at the junction of Hoyt and Carroll.

[2] The peninsula was an island at high water.

have a fort with four eighteen-pounders to fire *en barbette*, that is over the top of the works, which is vastly better than firing through embrasures, as we can now bring all our guns to bear on the same object at once. The fort is named Fort Defiance. Should the enemy's fleet make an attempt, they will, I think, be annoyed by it exceedingly. It is thought to be one of the most important posts we have. There are two families here — Mr. Vandyke, and his son, good staunch whigs, and very clever folks — between whom and our people a very agreeable intercourse subsists. I rode out with the young man about a week ago to a place called Flushing, on Long Island, sixteen miles off, where, and in most of the country towns round about, the tories from the city have taken shelter. *It is almost incredible how many of these vermin there are.* Scarce a house we rode by, but Mr. Vandyke would say, 'There lives a rascally tory.' The day before yesterday, a boat belonging to one of them was taken, coming from the Asia, on board of which ship she had been carrying provisions. There were a number of letters tied up in a bag with lead in it, in order to sink them in case of surprise, but this happened to be so quick as to prevent them from doing it. The contents of the letters from tories have not transpired, but the owner has absconded. It is to be wished that some method could be taken *to break up their nest, as I am of opinion* that should the enemy appear the major part of the tories would not hesitate a moment in declaring for them."

Within the lines of the entrenchments, two other fortifications had been constructed, to command important points. One of these was erected upon a conical hill, called Ponkiesberg, which rose in such prominent and

well-defined outline from the nearly plane surface as to excite the query if it was not the work of human hands. It occupied the western half of the block bounded by Atlantic, Pacific, Court, and Clinton streets; and its elevation above the present grade was from sixty to eighty feet.[1] The approach of the enemy was to be announced to Washington and the troops in New York by the firing of the guns from the top of Cobble hill, as the eminence was called at that day.[2]

The summit of this striking eminence was crowned with a redoubt mounting three guns, that commanded the space between it and Fort Box, and the Red Hook lane which wound around its base. This fortification was intended to serve as a portion of an interior line of defense, should the enemy succeed in landing at Red Hook, or in crossing Gowanus creek.

Fort Stirling, the largest fortification built on Long Island, was erected upon the heights overlooking the East River; its guns sweeping the channel between Governor's Island and Brooklyn, as well as the whole width of the river. It was star-shaped, and covered an area of two acres, near the junction of Pierrepont and Hicks streets. Remains of a fortification, supposed to occupy its site, were visible within the memory of many persons now living. Eight heavy guns were mounted upon its breastworks,

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[1] During the war of 1812, another redoubt was erected upon this hill, and called Fort Swift; but at the period of the revolution it was known as Corkscrew fort and Cobble hill. A circular road led up to its summit, from which was visible the whole extent of the line of defenses, the wooded hills from Governor's Island to the Bedford road, with the valley and the salt meadow which lay between.

[2] General orders July 18th.—*American Archives*, I, 418.

and covered the approach by land along the low ground from Atlantic to Hamilton avenue.

It is evident from the position of Forts Stirling, Ponkiesberg, and Box, that but little reliance was placed upon the natural defense afforded by Gowanus creek, or on the ability of the occupants of Fort Defiance to repulse an attack in that direction. In fact, the small number of troops which could be spared to defend the lines of Brooklyn, made it necessary to shorten these as much as possible; and, in pursuance of such a design, these strong interior redoubts had been constructed, although unconnected with each other by lines of entrenchments. A great citadel, which should cover five acres, had been contemplated in the original plan of the defenses. It was to occupy a site near that on which the City Hall now stands, and was to be called the Congress.[1]

A month before the vigorous prosecution of the construction of fortifications in Brooklyn had commenced, Governor's Island had been the scene of most stirring activity. A thousand men had taken possession of it, on the fifteenth of April, and had begun to turn its entire area into a fortification, which would enable its defenders to effectually resist the attempts of the enemy's ships to break through the obstructions in the channel.

The number of guns mounted upon the breastworks from Fort Putnam to Fort Defiance was thirty-five, of all calibres, though mainly eighteen-pounders. Ticonderoga and New Providence had contributed to the armament; and the valor of Col. Allen and Commodore Hopkins

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[1] Peter Force.—*American Archives*, v, 480.

had combined to give the Americans possession of these means of defense. Such were the preparations for resistance to the invader; extensive in design, but incomplete in accomplishment; planned for a defense, that left defenders out of the calculation; and strong for resistance against an attack which was never attempted.[1]

To defend these interior lines, in front of the village of Brooklyn-church, a force of eight thousand men was the smallest to which they could have been entrusted, with any hope of success. In addition to this, the exterior lines would require as large a number of troops to hold them, for a day, against only an equal number of the enemy.

All the force which Washington had had at his disposal on the 8th of August, to meet these demands, and to provide for the exigencies of his position in New York, amounted to only seventeen thousand two hundred and twenty-five men; of whom three thousand six hundred and sixty-eight were sick, and unfit for duty. These raw, undisciplined troops, were extended over a line of defense

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[1] The British fortifications of Brooklyn, erected a few weeks after the retreat of the Americans, were constructed on a line interior to and shorter than the American entrenchments. They were constructed with much care, though the British seem to have contemplated more the defense of the harbor than of the land. Lieut. Anburey, who visited them in October, 1781, describes at some length the strong fortifications from which the rebel Gen. Washington was driven by the valor of the British troops. He expresses great surprise at the evacuation by Gen. Washington and his troops; when the fact is, that at the time of his visit, not one foot of the lines constructed by the Americans had been in existence for more than five years. Gen. Johnson says, in his manuscript journal, that on the occupation of the lines by the British, the inhabitants of Brooklyn were immediately summoned to aid in the leveling of the fortifications of the Americans. This is confirmed by the testimony of Gen. Robertson, in his evidence before the committee appointed to investigate the conduct of the war by Gen. Howe, in which he says: "Three weeks after the occupation of the lines, scarcely a vestige of them remained."

reaching from King's Bridge, on Manhattan Island, to Bedford, on Long Island, or more than seventeen miles in length. The urgent representations of Washington to the governors of Pennsylvania, Maryland and the New England States, that he was in reality defending the gate to each of their capitals, brought nearly ten thousand additional militia to his camp, during the succeeding fortnight. But of the twenty-seven thousand men now in the camps on Long and Manhattan Islands, seven thousand were either in the hospitals, or unfit for service from illness. On the twenty-second of August, Col. Hand's Pennsylvania regiment of riflemen, then enrolling five hundred and fifty men, was the only force occupying the broad area of territory between the Brooklyn lines and the shore of New York bay; aided by the occasional service of the two Kings county troops of horse, as patrols. Within the lines were Col. Ward's regiment, nearly six hundred strong; Col. Atlee's Pennsylvania battalion, of about the same strength; Col. Smallwood's, of four hundred, and Col. Hazlitt's, of two hundred men. Col. Smith's and Col. Remsen's regiments of Long Island militia, of about three hundred each, and Col. Lasher's New York State militia, numbering five hundred and fifty men, were designated to man the lines; their undisciplined character, and the suspected loyalty of many of both officers and privates, rendering them unfit to be employed in the open field.[1] About the same time two regiments of Connecticut troops, under Cols. Huntington and Parsons, and two Pennsyl-

[1] The first two regiments were formed under the provision of Congress, ordering one-fourth of the militia of the island to be drafted. They numbered eight or nine hundred men.— *Silas Wood*, 126.

vania regiments, under Cols. Miles and Lutz, were ordered to cross to Brooklyn; and soon after the landing of the British, they were in position, on the hills overlooking Flatbush. The strength of these regiments is unknown; but, estimating them by those of other states, their aggregate was probably not far from two thousand men. This gave a force of five thousand five hundred, officers and privates, defending the Brooklyn lines on the 22d of August. More than two-thirds of this number were militia; and the regulars, enlisted in the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, had never been in battle.

Gen. Nathaniel Greene, who was in command, had made himself perfectly familiar with the peculiarities of the country in his front, and was particularly zealous in causing the whole shore of the bay, and the roads and passes through the woods and hills, to be constantly scoured by patrols and scouting parties.

During the interval of repose which succeeded the arrival of the last squadron of the fleet, its movements, performed with the greatest deliberation, had been the subject of profound solicitude, as well as full of mystery to the Americans. One day it had anchored in Jaques bay, on the Staten Island shore; the next, it stood up the inner bay for a mile or two, the almost countless vessels of which it was composed stretching across from Staten to Long Island, and overshadowing the wide inland sea with their sails. The morning of another day discovered two of the men-of-war, favored by the wind and tide, pressing up the Hudson under full sail, and treating the cannonade from Red Hook, two miles distant, with contemptuous silence. A few days of marauding from the ship's boats, and of recon-

noitering from the maintops, were hurriedly brought to a close, by the discovery that the rebels were preparing a hot reception for them, with two fire-ships. A sudden and rapid flight down the river, back to their anchoring ground, enabled them to escape the conflagration of the fire-ships, which floated harmlessly until they were consumed.[1]

The morning of the twenty-second of August dawned with tropical brilliancy, upon a scene of unequaled interest to the spectators of both armies. Long before the sun had risen, the British army had been under arms; and from the various camps the entire force was marching, with the loud strains of martial music, to the place of embarkation. The men-of-war had quit their anchorage, and were standing up the bay under easy sail, with open ports, and guns ready for action. At the landing on Staten Island, seventy-five fleet boats, attended by three bateaux and two galleys, received four thousand of the Hessian troops on board; and, at the firing of a signal gun, their thousand oars dipped almost simultaneously into the waters of the bay. Another corps, of five thousand men, was embarked upon the transports, which now took up their position under

[1] During the interval which had elapsed since his arrival, the spies of Gen. Howe had penetrated every camp of the Americans, and haunted every entrenchment. Gen. Greene reported on the 18th, "Our outguards suspect that there are spies about the camp. The sentries have fired half a dozen times a night the three preceding nights." This dangerous service was not undertaken alone by the loyalists. At the request of General Mercer, Captain John Meserole, of Bushwick, adventured upon the hazardous attempt to reconnoitre the British camp on Staten Island at night, for the purpose of gaining information that would enable the general to attack an isolated post under cover of the darkness of the next night. This perilous enterprise Capt. Meserole accomplished, aided by his intimate knowledge of the island and its secret paths.— See Gen. Mercer's Report, *American Archives*, I, fifth series, 369.

the guns of the men-of-war, attended by ten bateaux to aid in their landing.[1] In another instant the surface of the bay between the two islands was covered with the flotilla, rowing swiftly towards the Long Island shore. In advance sailed the galleys and bateaux, over the shoal water where the great ships could not float, firing from their bow-guns as they approached the land.

The scene was not less magnificent than appalling. The greatest naval and military force which had ever left the shores of England, was now assembled in the harbor of New York; for the mightiest power upon the globe had put forth its greatest strength to crush its rebellious colonies.[2] Thirty-seven men-of-war guarded a transport fleet of four hundred vessels, freighted with enormous trains of artillery, and every conceivable munition of war; with troops of artillery and cavalry horses, and provisions for the sustenance of the thirty-five thousand soldiers and sailors who had been borne across the ocean in their hulls. Amid all the stirring scenes which ninety years past have witnessed in the great metropolis of the western world, nothing, which will compare in magnitude and grandeur with that upon which dawned the morning of the 22d of August, 1776, has human eye since beheld in America.

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[1] One element of the invading army has escaped the notice of historians, who have not failed to comment upon its heterogeneous character. Orders had been issued that the old laws of England should be revived against Sorners, Egyptians, or Bohemians, as the people called Gipsies were termed; and many of them were impressed into the ranks. These erratic people took the first occasion that offered to desert, and many of them never returned to England.— *Simpson's History of the Gipsies.*

[2] Sir George Collier, who commanded the Rainbow, the leading vessel of the convoy, on the landing of the Hessians on the 22d of August, makes this statement in his narrative.— See Appendix 24.

Almost a century has elapsed; and the gigantic schemes of commerce, and the awful energies of warfare, have alike failed to assemble a fleet so numerous, or an invading force so vast, upon the waters of the Western ocean.

So thoroughly planned had been the movement, that, by eight o'clock, the flotilla was under way; and before mid-day fifteen thousand men, with forty pieces of artillery, and the horses of the regiment of light dragoons, had been landed at Denyse's point, then used as a ferry-landing from Staten Island. On the approach of the enemy, Col. Hand's riflemen had slowly withdrawn from the shore, only pausing to deliver a shot or two, at long range, on the advancing boats.[1] In New York, the gloom which followed the announcement of the landing of the enemy, was only relieved by the bustle of the preparations for defense. Bodies of the militia, which could scarcely be dignified by the title of regiments, were hurried over the ferry to Brooklyn; apprehension, almost attaining to despair, filling their hearts with gloom and sadness. We have the records of numbers of these soldiers, unaccustomed to the presence of an angry foe, to testify to the awful dread which over-clouded every mind, at this fateful period. Nor is this a subject for surprise, to one who reflects upon the gigantic disparity of the forces soon to meet in the terrible onset of battle. To most of our countrymen, who crossed the East River on the morning of the 22d of August, it was a self-devotion almost equivalent to voluntary martyrdom.

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[1] Capt. afterwards Lord Harris, declares the landing to have been made without opposition; but there is reason to believe that the flotilla was fired upon by a battery.

Thronged as the day had been with portentous events, and shadowed by forebodings, it was not permitted to close without a war of the elements, which added to the horrors that already hung over the American camp in Brooklyn. A dark cloud rapidly gathered in the west, as the day waned, and in a few moments overspread the sky in that direction. It was evident that it was freighted with electrical bolts, that would soon burst, with all the violence of our summer thunder gusts, upon the devoted camp. In a few moments the roar of the artillery of heaven, and the flashes of the sheet lightning, were appalling to the stoutest warrior. For three hours the crash of thunder, following instantly the blinding glare of light, was almost incessant; and when morning dawned, the victims of elemental rage lay in more than one tent, never to be appalled with the sound of battle again. A captain and two lieutenants, of McDougall's regiment, were killed by one flash; and when the canvass of another fallen tent was raised, it disclosed the bodies of ten soldiers, who had in one moment been summoned to the presence of their Maker. It was under the influence of such an ominous event that the American army was to meet an enemy for the first time in the open field.[1]

[1] For minute accounts of this terrible exhibition of electrical power, see *Chaplain Benedict's Narrative.* Document 15. Also *American Archives,* I, fourth series, p. 1112 and 1163. Copied in Document 22.

CHAPTER V.

The Battles of Flatbush, Gowanus, and Brooklyn.

The landing of the British, at Denyse's ferry, decided the point of attack, uncertainty about which had filled the mind of the American commander with grave anxiety.[1] Preparations to receive the enemy on the wooded heights of Flatbush and Gowanus, were now hurriedly made; while Col. Hand's riflemen hung upon their front, to embarrass and check their progress as long as possible. The consternation which seized the minds of the inhabitants, impelled them to instant flight. Such fearful stories had been narrated of the barbarity of the Hessian invaders, that nothing was expected but indiscrimate massacre at their hands. Houses and lands, and personal effects, were abandoned by the farmers of Flatbush and New Utrecht, who fled to the Brooklyn lines, or to Connecticut, for safety. The cattle were driven from the farms by squads of American soldiers, or were left in the field or the stall by their owners. The food with which the tables had been spread was even left untasted, so absorbing was the fear of the approaching enemy.[2]

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[1] "Before the landing of the enemy on Long Island, the point of attack could not be known, or any satisfactory judgment formed of their intentions. It might be on Long Island, or Bergen, or directly upon the city."— *Washington's letter to Congress*, Sept. 8th, 1776.

[2] An illustration of the mutual distrust with which the British and the residents of Long Island viewed each other, is afforded by an incident

In compliance with orders issued from headquarters on the first appearance of the British forces on Staten Island, the grain and hay of the farmers had been either stacked in the field at the harvest, or removed to such a distance from the barns that the destruction of the forage by fire would not endanger them. The landing of the enemy was the signal for a conflagration that spread over the wide plains of the five towns of Kings county, devouring the rich harvests, covering the land with a dense canopy of smoke, or lighting up the gloomy night with lurid flames.[1] Marching behind the fugitives, the advanced guard of the enemy pressed forward, clearing the woods and lanes of Col. Hand's riflemen, who still hung upon the front and flanks of the column. Lord Cornwallis, in command of the British grenadiers and light infantry, followed closely after, and in the afternoon of the 22d some of his troops reached Flatbush. As soon as information of the landing was received by Washington, he ordered a reinforcement of six regiments for General Sullivan, under the apprehension that the Brooklyn lines would be immediately assaulted.[2]

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occurring at the farm house of Van Duyne in New Utrecht. When the news of the landing and march of the enemy reached the family, they were engaged in withdrawing from the oven the abundant store of bread and baked meats which the provident Dutch customs of the Island required. The display of tempting food upon the table, abandoned in the sudden flight, suggested to the British soldiers, who entered the house, nothing less than a deliberate attempt at poisoning them, and they accordingly expressed their indignation by tossing the rich joints and white loaves on their bayonets about the kitchen.

[1] "There is an abundance of smoke on Long Island, our folks having set fire to stacks of hay, etc., to prevent the enemy's being benefited, in case they get any advantage against us."—*Letter dated Aug. 22d*, 1776. See Document 22.

[2] *To Major General Heath.*

"Sir: Yesterday morning the enemy landed at Gravesend bay upon Long Island, to the number of about *eight thousand*, from the best information I

A small redoubt had been constructed by the Americans near the western boundary of the village of Flatbush; and here occurred the first collision between the British and the American forces on our Island. Lord Cornwallis had been directed to assume command of the reserves, and move upon Flatbush. At Gravesend he halted; but he pushed forward the vanguard, under the Hessian Colonel Donop, to Flatbush, where it arrived in the evening. Three hundred American riflemen, who had occupied the village, abandoned it, as soon as the Hessian battery of six guns had taken position and opened fire. The possession of this slumberous little Dutch village by the Hessians was not, however, destined to be maintained without a struggle. The awe inspired by the imposing array of the German troops had worn away in the cool night, and early on the morning of the 23d the slumbers of the heavy-eyed Hessians were broken by a dash upon their right wing, resting near the west end of the village. On the thickly wooded hills near Flatbush, Col. Hand was in command of the whole Pennsylvania battalion of riflemen, consisting of five hundred and fifty-three officers and privates. Believing that the familiarity acquired by combat with these

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can get. Colonel Hand retreated before them, burning as he came along several parcels of wheat, and such other matters as he judged would fall into the enemy's hands. Our first accounts were, that they intended, by a forced march, to surprise Gen. Sullivan's lines, who commands during the illness of Gen. Greene; whereupon I immediately reinforced that post with six regiments. But the enemy halted last night at Flatbush. If they attack General Sullivan this day, and should show no disposition to attack me likewise at the making of the next flood [i. e. in New York, where Gen. Washington was then stationed], I shall send such further reinforcements to Long Island as I may judge expedient, not choosing to weaken this post too much before I am certain that the enemy are not making a feint upon Long Island, to draw our force to that quarter, when their real design may perhaps be upon this."— *Washington's letter, Aug.* 23d, 1776.

formidable strangers, would dissipate the unreasoning dread with which they were regarded, Col. Hand ordered an assault upon their lines.[1]

The attack was spirited, though feebly maintained, as the Americans retired to the woods so soon as a field-piece was brought to bear upon them. Gathering confidence, however, with their experience, the Americans, on the afternoon of the same day, made preparations for another assault. What was the force engaged, or who commanded in person, is uncertain, as the accounts of these skirmishes are derived only from Hessian journalists and tradition. Col. Donop's left wing, encamped upon the ground a short distance west of the Brooklyn and New Utrecht road, was on this occasion the object of attack. So impetuous and fierce was the assault, that that portion of the Hessian corps was driven back upon the main body, then lying south of the Dutch Church, and the whole detachment was held at bay for more than an hour. The fire of the American riflemen was so galling that the Hessians were compelled to improvise redoubts, from the houses of Adrian Hegeman and Lefferts Martense, for the purpose of repelling their attack. In these buildings they cut holes, wherever these afforded them position for firing upon the American sharpshooters. At length the cannon, from

[1] "On Friday the 23d, a party of British took possession of Flatbush, which brought on a hot fire from our troops, who are advantageously posted in and on every eminence. An advanced party are encamped a little to the north west of Flatbush church, and have a battery somewhat west of Jeremiah Vanderbilt, whence they fire briskly upon our people, who often approach and discharge their rifles within two hundred yards of their works. One of our gunners threw a shell into Mr. Axtel's house where a number of officers were at dinner, but we have not heard what damage was done."— *Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents*, 796.

which the Hessian gunners had doubtless been driven by our riflemen, were brought into position, and opened their fire upon the assaulting party.[1] At this time the houses of Jeremiah Vanderbilt, Leffert Lefferts, and Evert Hegeman, were in flames, and added by their conflagration to the horrors which war had brought upon this quiet village. Although it has been a popular habit to charge this incendiarism upon the Hessian invaders, it is yet certain that these dwellings were fired by the Americans, to prevent their occupation as defensive positions by the enemy.[2]

Our countrymen, to whom the unfamiliar roar of ordnance had been so dreadful on the day before, had now discovered that its thunder was not accompanied by the inevitable bolt of death; and it required the steady service of the entire battery, for some minutes, to compel their retreat.[3] On the 25th the Americans determined to meet the Hessian artillery with the same arms; and accordingly a strong body of riflemen, accompanied by several guns, pushed forward beyond the edge of the woods, and opened fire, with round and grape shot, upon the devoted village, behind whose walls the enemy had sought shelter from the

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[1] "This afternoon the enemy formed and attempted to pass the road by *Bedford*. A smart fire between them and the riflemen ensued. The officer sent off for a reinforcement, which I ordered immediately. A number of musketry came to the assistance of the riflemen, whose fire, with that of our field pieces, caused a retreat of the enemy. Our men followed them to the house of Judge Lefferts (where a number of them had taken lodgings), drove them out, and burned the house and a number of other buildings contiguous."— *Gen. Sullivan's letter.* Document 21.

[2] Washington considered the burning of these houses unnecessary and criminal. The irregular skirmishing seems to have been equally unsatisfactory to him. See Document 20, in Appendix.

[3] *Extract of a letter from New York, dated Aug. 24th*, 1776: "The day before yesterday a detachment of the enemy landed at New Utrecht on Long Island; they are said to be about nine thousand. Two or three

rebel sharpshooters. The attack was well maintained for a time, but was at length repulsed by the greater weight and steadiness of the Hessian artillery. The poor Germans, however, began to find this kind of warfare harassing and depressing. They had been accustomed to fight enemies who slept at night, and behaved altogether in a decent and respectable style of belligerency. These reckless, dare-devil barbarians, who routed up their camp at night with the deadly din of war, or who slyly crawled serpent-like into an ambush during the day, from which their long rifles wounded and slew their comrades, were an intolerable nuisance, which the English government ought to have abated before it called upon its neighbors to aid it in fighting. So loudly was their disgust expressed at this sort of warfare, that Lord Cornwallis was fain to relieve them from picket and guard duty, so that they might be enabled to procure a little rest.[1] The inconsiderate Americans, however, beat up their camp again at 2 o'clock on the morning of the 26th, and they were once more hurried to the front to assist in repelling these midnight prowlers. This was the fifth considerable skirmish, in three

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skirmishes happened yesterday between their advanced guards and ours, in which we were victorious; we lost not a man, but killed several of the enemy, among the rest one British and one Hessian officer. The former had a good deal of gold in his pocket; cannot get fairly at particulars; the Hessians had rifles. We have got several neat cutteaus and fusees, such as officers use, from which we suppose the officers were killed or very badly wounded and carried off the field by the enemy. The enemy (the advanced guard said to be three thousand) attempted getting to Bedford, on the Jamaica road, but were driven a mile and a half further back than where they set out from. There is firing upon the island now."—*American Archives*, I, 1144.

[1] For minute details of these skirmishes, the reader is referred to the Hessian accounts in *Elking's Auxiliaries in America*, an extract from which is given in Document 40; and also to *Col. Chambers' letter*, Document 31.

days, which these uneasy Yankees had compelled the slow-moving Germans to repel, and their pertinacity was becoming unendurable. During the afternoon of the 26th, a stronger force of the Americans than had yet been engaged was pushed forward, in an assault on the Hessian lines; and this time with such threatening demonstrations that Lord Cornwallis, whose instructions were imperative not to press the rebels from their position, immediately ordered Colonel Donop to retire. The brave though cruel Hessian begged hard to be permitted to remain and intrench himself, but he was without doubt compelled to retire to the main body, which was far too powerful for the light assaulting column of the Americans to make any impression upon it.[1]

During the afternoon of the 26th, Lord Cornwallis had withdrawn his command, which formed the advanced guard, to Flatlands; and at 9 o'clock in the evening he moved eastward, on the road to New Lotts. He was followed by a heavy corps under Clinton, who commanded the division.

Thirteen regiments, with sixteen pieces of artillery, under the command of Lord Percy, marched immediately after Clinton; and this last corps was accompanied by the commander-in-chief, Sir William Howe.

In profound silence, and under cover of the night, these troops were withdrawn from their encampments, in which

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[1] In the skirmishes which occurred on this day, Col. Martin of the New Jersey levies, received a severe wound in the breast.— *Washington's letter to Congress*, Aug. 26th.

Harmanus Rutgers fell at the Flatbush Pass, being struck in the breast by a six-pound shot.— *Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents*, 796.

Further accounts of the skirmishes near the village of Flatbush will be found in Col. Chambers' letter. Document 31.

the tents were left standing, and every appearance of occupation was maintained. The greatest secrecy was preserved regarding the intended route, and every caution taken to prevent its discovery. The movement of the three divisions was very slow, in order to give time for the occupation of all the points of anticipated attack by the light troops under Cornwallis. These proceeded with the greatest rapidity and secrecy, everywhere sweeping up such of the inhabitants as might give the alarm, until they reached the little salt creek which was crossed by Schoonmaker's bridge, a short distance south-west of the present site of East New York. Here preparations were made for a serious resistance. Skirmishers were thrown out, right and left; and as the position could not easily be turned, the greatest caution was exercised in approaching it.

To the surprise of the British, the post was entirely unoccupied; and the route was now open to the foot of the hills where the Jamaica road entered upon the plains at East New York. Crossing the fields from the New Lotts road, in a direct line to this point, Lord Cornwallis arrived, about 2 o'clock in the morning, at William Howard's tavern; which still remains, at the corner of Broadway and the Jamaica and Brooklyn turnpike, then called the King's highway.

Here the three tories, who had hitherto guided the invaders, were at fault; and at their recommendation the innkeeper, William Howard, and his son, a young lad of fourteen years, were compelled to guide the detachment to a pass over the hills known as the Rockaway path. This was a bridle road, which diverged from New Bushwick Lane, near the north entrance of Evergreen Cemetery,

and, crossing the latter near the present chapel, emerged from it into the Jamaica road at the south-east corner of what is now the Cemetery.

As narrated by their young but intelligent guide and observer, every incident of the march shows the greatest circumspection. The young forest trees that obstructed the route, were sawed instead of being chopped down, to avoid the noise which might alarm the American outposts, supposed to be guarding the deep winding cut on the Bedford road through the hills. The guns were drawn by six horses, which dashed up the hill at full speed after the road had been cleared, and the flanking party had passed. The vanguard marched rapidly through the defile, and by a circuitous route reached the Bedford road, only to find the pass unguarded.[1]

The writer has several times had the good fortune to trace the route of the British army through the pass over the hills, accompanied by the gentleman who is now the proprietor of a portion of the ground, and who was often visited by the younger Howard. This person had accurately and minutely pointed out every step of the march in which he guided Cornwallis on that night.

The astounding intelligence that the Americans had neglected to guard a pass which had been turned with such labor and caution, was communicated to the main body, then resting on the plain at East New York; and it was immediately under march, along the King's highway. The day had now dawned, and the troops along the whole line were halted for breakfast upon the Bushwick hills.

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[1] Narration of William Howard to James Pilling.

At 9 o'clock the second division, under Sir Henry Clinton, had reached Bedford, having had the amazing good fortune to accomplish the most difficult of military movements: a night march, over an intricate and unknown route, in the immediate vicinity of the enemy, in perfect secrecy. The advanced guard had swept every human being along the line of march into its great drag-net, and silenced every tongue which could tell the tale.

Leaving, at this point, the movements of the invading forces, let us turn now to observe the changing fortunes of the American army.

The short night of midsummer was just beginning to disappear before the gray dawn of morning, when Lord Stirling's division was aroused by the announcement, made by Gen. Putnam in person, of the approach of the British forces on the road from the Narrows.[1]

The woods that covered the hilly and broken ground from Flatbush plains to Gowanus bay, and extended in an unbroken range from the present Greenwood to Evergreen Cemetery, concealed alike the numbers and movements of the enemy, and the positions and defenses of the Americans. Behind this green curtain, 17,000 of the best troops of Europe were marching to attack 5,000 undisciplined men, on the first pitched battle-field of the Revolution.

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[1] General Putnam was now in command of all the forces on Long Island, while General Sullivan commanded the advanced line upon the exterior defenses. Gen. Greene, who had before been in command, had written to Washington on the 15th of August, from Long Island, as follows: "I am sorry to be under the necessity of acquainting you, that I am confined to my bed with a raging fever. The critical situation of affairs makes me the more anxious; but I hope through the assistance of Providence to be able to ride, before the presence of the enemy may make it absolutely necessary."

It is scarcely necessary to say that this hope was completely unfulfilled, as Gen. Greene for some weeks subsequently was dangerously ill.

Hitherto the contest had been confined to the defense of a redoubt, like that at Bunker hill, or to the siege of a city, as at Boston. Now the trial was to be upon the open field. Taught by the harassing and terrible retreat from Concord, when the lanes and roads of Lexington were strewed with British dead and wounded, and by the dreadful slaughter on Charlestown Neck, where two entire regiments had been swept away only to obtain possession of a worthless position already abandoned, the enemy had at last determined to treat the Rebellion as an affair of no mean importance.

The great maxim of war taught by Frederick the Great — that to gain victories it is only necessary to be strongest at the point of attack — had been adopted by the British commanders; and the enormous advantage which was secured to them by their possession of a fleet and their command of the water, enabled them to act in accordance with it. They were now, therefore, about to test the truth of the Prussian conqueror's motto. A vast armada, with hundreds of great guns, covered the waters of New York Bay; a great and compact body of disciplined soldiers was soon to be hurled, in one solid and homogeneous mass, upon a little army of raw militia, scattered thinly along an extended line of defense, almost without arms, and unprotected in its rear by even a single vessel of war.

It is very difficult to form a satisfactory estimate of the number of American troops on Long Island, on this and the subsequent days. Washington, in his letter to Congress, written on the 26th, says: "The shifting and changing which the regiments have undergone of late, has

prevented their making proper returns, and of course puts it out of my power to transmit a general one of the army." The whole number of American troops which crossed to Long Island, at various times, before and after the battle, has been estimated at nine to eleven thousand; but the difficulty of estimating the strength of the force opposed to the British is greatly increased by the manner in which Washington rated his troops. In some of his letters, which mention numbers, it is evident that he referred only to the regulars, entirely disregarding the militia. During the battle, also, and on the subsequent days, troops were crossed in regiments, battalions, companies, and even in unorganized squads, which in the hurry and confusion were hardly even enrolled.

At this time, however, the whole American force was probably not greater than five thousand five hundred men.[1]

No continuous line of defense outside of the entrenchments had been fixed upon; and the defensible positions were occupied only by strong picket guards, which should either have been instructed to retreat upon the main body as soon as the intentions of the enemy were developed, or have been at once and heavily reinforced when the point of attack became apparent.[2]

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[1] Col. Haslett, in a letter dated Oct. 4th, 1776, says: "On Tuesday, the 27th, Lord Stirling's brigade, consisting of five regiments and a few of Sullivan's, not exceeding five thousand men, were ordered to advance beyond the lines and repulse the enemy."

[2] In his orders to Putnam, dated August 25th, Washington says: "The wood next Red Hook should be well attended to. Put some of the most disorderly riflemen into it. The militia are the most indifferent troops, and will do for the interior works, whilst your best men should at all hazards prevent the enemy's passing the wood and approaching the works. The woods should be secured by abatis; traps and ambuscades should be laid for their parties sent after cattle."— *Document* 20.

On the 26th, a picket guard, from Col. Atlee's battalion of one hundred and twenty men, was thrown forward on the right, as far as the junction of Martense's lane with the Shore Road. Here stood the Red Lion Inn, the central point around which on the next day swayed the eddying tide of battle. Martense's lane wound through the Greenwood hills in a narrow defile; and along its borders, wherever the rocks and stone walls afforded defensible points, the battalion took position. Near midnight two of the enemy's scouts were observed by the sentries, approaching across a melon patch, and were immediately fired upon, when the body to which they belonged retreated.

At one o'clock, however, the enemy reappeared, two or three hundred strong, and exhibited an intention of surrounding the picket-guard, and cutting off their retreat. The watchfulness of the sentries prevented a surprise, and two or three close volleys were discharged upon them; after which, finding themselves outnumbered two to one, the guard retreated. Information of the enemy's approach was at once communicated to Gen. Putnam, who was anxiously awaiting the tidings and he at once proceeded to Stirling's camp for the purpose of giving orders for his advance.

The morning of the eventful 27th of August, was now dawning. It found another portion of the American troops, under Gen. Sullivan, in line of battle on the ridge of hills overlooking the enemy's encampment at Flatbush. So peculiar in its formation was this line that it is difficult to comprehend its details from a single stand-point. The centre of the American lines, however, was at the junction of the Porte road with the Flatbush road, near where the present Flatbush Avenue terminates, at the City line.

At this point a small redoubt had been constructed, whose miniature guns mocked the Valley Grove pass with the impotent threat of a defense. Scarcely a mile away, upon the plain at the entrance of the village of Flatbush, was the little half-moon intrenchment, thrown up by the Americans, and abandoned on the approach of Cornwallis' troops. It will be recollected that this General had made a threatening demonstration upon the American works on the hills, on the first day of his occupation of Flatbush, but had retired when his reconnoissance had developed the position of the rebel troops, and had proved the necessity of an assault to obtain possession of it.

The abandonment of the lower redoubt by the Americans, without serious resistance, had suggested the probability of a similar movement from the hill work, whenever it should be attacked in force; but this was precisely what the enemy was most desirous to prevent. On the other hand around this feeble redoubt, the Americans anticipated that their opponent would concentrate his forces, and that here would occur the deadliest struggle of the day.

At this point, therefore, Major-General Sullivan, the commanding officer outside the entrenchments, took his position. From the centre of his line the range of hills bent, in an obtuse angle, forming two sides of an immense amphitheatre, along whose slopes waited the spectators who were so soon to become actors in this bloody drama. A small valley descended to the plain, from the summit of the ridge which was crowned by the redoubt; and along this natural glacis the enemy was expected to approach. The ridge was broken into small eminences, separated by shallow depressions, which were in many

places covered with bogs, of a few acres in extent, impassable to any troops except as skirmishers. Everywhere, over this varied surface, grew the luxuriant native forest trees. The slopes of the low hillocks to their summits, the valleys, and the swamps, were covered with them. Only the broad plain below had been cleared to receive the plough; and upon it rose the quaint structures of the Dutch villages of Midwout or Flatbush, Amersfort or Flatlands, New Utrecht, and Gravesend.

In full view of the American front lay the combined armies of England and the German principalities; while the position of the American forces was masked entirely from the view of the enemy by the great forest, underneath which they were intrenched. The very mystery surrounding their position obtained for it the respect of the enemy, who had now paused, in front of the dark woods which hid it, for five days. Following the summit of the hills in the disposition of his troops, Sullivan had placed the regiment on his right facing obliquely his centre and left. Along his front the trees had been felled; and rude fortifications had been made of their trunks, while the branches had been hastily arranged in a line of *abatis*.

Near the redoubt, in front of the lines, had stood the great white oak which had become historical as a monumental tree, being named in the patent of Gov. Dongan which established the boundary lines of Brooklyn. The stern exigencies of war had called for its sacrifice; and its great branches, filling the narrow lane, proved a formidable though a temporary obstacle to the enemy's advance. A nearly impassable swamp, on the east of the road, added such strength to that part of the front as confirmed the

Americans in the belief that Valley Grove would be the route of the assaulting column.

The intrenchments at this place were of the slightest character which could be dignified with the term, as it formed no part of Washington's design that they should be occupied, except as exterior lines, from which his troops would retreat to the inner and strongly intrenched line of defense. Still, the Americans had not been entirely idle, as shallow pits thrown up along the front attested. These were sufficiently imposing to give a momentary check to an enemy advancing upon the front. The great strength of the position, however, lay in its mystery; and that uncertainty made the dense woods of the Flatbush hills an object of dread to the British commander, as his long delay and cautious approaches fully proved. The field of slaughter on Charleston heights was still present to his imagination, and made him wary of another encounter, which might prove as formidable and as inglorious.

One scanty regiment of Sullivan's command stretched along the brow of the hill, on either side of the Flatbush road, three or four hundred feet south of its junction with the Porte road. Two regiments, on the left, prolonged the line to the east of the Flatbush road for nearly a mile; while the First Pennsylvania regiment, commanded by Col. Miles, occupied the extreme left, nearly a mile further east, where their position was intersected by the Clove Road, half a mile south of Bedford.[1]

[1] Among the combatants on the side of the Americans were a number of Indians of the friendly tribes. This fact is stated by Col. Guy Johnston, in his letter to Lord Germaine, in which he affirms that several Indians were taken prisoners by the British in the battle of Long Island.— *Col. Hist. of New York*, vol. VIII, p. 741.

The right wing of Sullivan's command was therefore supposed to rest upon Stirling's left, while the other wing hung suspended in air. Three miles of front were occupied by four regiments of raw provincial troops, with many a long break between; while, but little more than a mile distant, seventeen thousand British soldiers awaited the signal for assault.

On the 23d, Washington in general orders had addressed to his army a solemn appeal, in which every sentiment that dignifies humanity was called into requisition, to fill the hearts of his soldiers with firmness and courage. "The enemy have now landed on Long Island; and the hour is fast approaching on which the honor and success of this army, and the safety of our bleeding country, depend. Remember, officers and soldiers, that you are free men, fighting for the blessings of liberty; that slavery will be your portion, and that of your posterity, if you do not acquit yourselves like men. Remember how your courage and spirit have been despised and traduced by your cruel invaders; though they have found by dear experience, at Boston, Charleston, and other places, what a few men, contending in their own land, and in the best of causes, can do against hirelings and mercenaries. Be cool but determined; do not fire at a distance, but wait for orders from your officers. It is the General's express order that if any man attempt to skulk, lie down, or retreat without

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That Gen. Washington contemplated the employment of Indians in the American service, and was only deterred by his conviction of the impossibility of depending upon them for other purposes than plunder and massacre, we learn from his own letters.— *Sparks's Letters of Washington,* vol. III, p. 431.

orders, he be instantly shot down as an example. He hopes no such will be found in this army, but on the contrary that every one for himself resolving to conquer or die, and trusting in the smiles of heaven upon so just a cause, will behave with bravery and resolution." It was now evident to the Commander-in-chief that the assault upon his lines, so long impending, would be but little longer delayed.

For five days the white tents of the enemy had covered the plain beneath the hills, almost as far as the eye could distinguish their form. Five miles to the south they stretched, in an unbroken line, to the hamlet of Flatlands; and nearly as far to the south-west, where the little cluster of farm-houses showed the site of the Dutch village of Gravesend, their canvass walls glistened in the sun. The roll of the enemy's drums, the rattle of arms and accoutrements in the daily parade, and the shout of command, rose faintly to the ear from the wide plain; and sight and sound combined to exhibit to the sadly thin and feeble lines of the American army on the hills, what a vast armament, what gigantic forces, could in a single hour be hurled upon them.

It will be seen, from the preceding narrative, that the position of the American army on the morning of the 27th of August was one of appalling danger, of the extent of which, however, not one of its officers or men was yet conscious. No other portion of it was so completely isolated as was Stirling's division.

As already narrated, Gen. Putnam had hastened to give Lord Stirling orders to advance, immediately on hearing of the approach of the enemy at Martense's lane. Lord

Stirling was encamped outside the intrenchments, and, as he commanded the right wing, was doubtless occupying the junction of the Gowanus and Porte roads.

The repulse of Cornwallis at Valley Grove, and the skirmish near the Red Lion Inn on the night of the 26th, were believed to show movements of heads of columns, pushed forward to feel the position of the American troops, preparatory to an attack in force. Gen. Putnam, whose notions of military affairs were confined to the simple tactics of fighting the enemy whenever and wherever he challenged, at once determined to order forward all his disposable troops. Putnam's mind was entirely pre-occupied by the opinion which he had formed that the grand attack would be made on the Gowanus road, where the assaulting column could be protected by the guns of the fleet. This opinion he retained, although Gen. Sullivan had strongly pressed upon his attention the necessity of guarding the Jamaica pass. At three o'clock Lord Stirling, who had been aroused in his tent by Gen. Putnam in person, was informed by him that an important movement of the enemy had commenced on the extreme right, and that they were advancing in force through the Gowanus road from Flatbush. Stirling was directed to proceed at once with the two nearest regiments, and take such a position as would hold them in check.

Atlee's Pennsylvania and Smallwood's Maryland regiments, with Col. Haslett's Delaware battalion, composed the column which Lord Stirling led on this eventful morning. Cols. Smallwood and Haslett had been detained in the city on the night of the 26th, being engaged in official duty at the court-martial then sitting for the trial of

Lieut.-Col. Zedwitz. At the rising of the court it was too late, as Col. Smallwood asserts, for crossing the East River to Brooklyn; but pushing over early next morning they joined their regiments on the field of battle, while these were warmly engaged in repelling the first attack.

It is pleasant at this day, when all the mysterious craft and subtlety of the British plans of battle are unveiled to us — when we see how surely and resistlessly that terrible force had closed around the feeble ranks of the Americans — to notice the complaisant and honest confidence of these young warriors in their own prowess; the vigor and power of which, they firmly believed, kept the British Lion at bay for six long hours. The mutual compliments of these brave Southerners had excited their vanity, but nothing could lessen their fervent courage. "We were much caressed by the Southern troops," says Col. Haslett in a letter written a few months after the battle, "and highly complimented on our appearance and dexterity. Though six times our number, the enemy did not dare advance and attack us."

Col. Smallwood is more reserved in his expressions of assurance, in a letter written about the same time, which is by far the most satisfactory of the current accounts of the conflict. His succinct and graphic narration of the battle of Gowanus indicates a clear eye, and an educated and thoughtful brain, through which a suspicion of the enemy's crafty purposes seems to have strayed.

There is something strangely affecting in the language of the Maryland council of safety, on announcing to their delegate in Congress that the State quota of troops had been raised, when we recall the heroic devotion

and the sad fate of the noble youths who filled their ranks: "We shall have near four thousand men with you in a short time. This exceeds our proportion for the flying-camp; but we are sending all that we have, that can be armed and equipped, and the people of New York, for whom we have great affection, can have no more than our all."

Hastily forming these forces, Stirling pushed on to the ground lately occupied by Col. Atlee's picket corps. In his letter to Washington, written from on board the enemy's fleet, while a prisoner of war, he says that the enemy were then approaching on the road from Flatbush to the Red Lion Tavern.[1]

Half a mile before reaching that point, Stirling was met by Colonel Atlee's battalion, then slowly retiring from the advancing enemy, whose front was just discernible to the General in the gray dawn, approaching between him and the Red Lion. The line of battle was at once formed, at right angles to the shore road, from the bay to the summit of the hills near the present western boundary of Greenwood Cemetery.[2]

Col. Atlee's command was sent forward as a skirmish line, and took position on the left of the road, in the

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[1] Enclosed with this communication was a list of the several battalions and companies; on which Col. Smallwood's battalion is rated at nine companies, of seventy-six men each, or a total strength of six hundred and eighty-four men. It is probable that on the 27th of August this battalion did not number more than four hundred and fifty. See Document 33.

[2] Colonel Samuel J. Atlee has left an interesting journal of the events of the 26th of August, which will be found in Document 16.

This statement indicates very clearly to us two points of interest:

First, that part of Gen. Grant's forces marched from Flatbush through Martense's lane, a narrow road that skirts the southern boundary of Greenwood Cemetery; and, Second, that the Red Lion Tavern was situated near the junction of Martense's lane with the Gowanus road.

orchard of Wynant Bennet; while a portion of the Maryland regiment occupied a curve of the road at the foot of Twenty-third street, over a sand-hill called Bluckie's Barracks. Lord Stirling in person led Smallwood's and Haslett's regiments up the hills to the left, and placed them in position in the woods along the slope, to the top of the ridge.

The force now opposing Stirling was commanded by Gen. Grant, an officer who, like many other gallant gentlemen on either side, had served with distinction in the American campaigns against the French. His experience of American soldiership does not seem to have left a flattering impression upon his mind; as he once rose in his place in Parliament, when American affairs were under discussion, and declared that with five thousand British troops he would march from one end of the continent to the other. In the gallery of the House of Commons, on that occasion, sat a spectator who heard these contemptuous words, and who on this day marshaled a few hundred of the militia, so much despised, to meet in battle this proud boaster.

When forming his troops in line of battle, Lord Stirling addressed them, and repeated the bravado which he had heard from the lips of the General whom they were about to meet. "He may have," added Stirling, "his five thousand men with him now; we are not so many, but I think we are enough to prevent his advancing further over the continent than that mill-pond."

Gen. Grant's force consisted of two brigades and one regiment, with ten field-pieces. Accompanying his column were also two companies of New York provincials, which had been raised by the exertions of Gov. Tryon, and

the members of which were now about to imbrue their hands in the blood of their countrymen. On the heights of Gowanus, for the first time in the Northern States, Americans were arrayed against each other in battle. Some of these, doubtless, were neighbors and former friends of those in the American ranks; who, on the approach of the enemy to Long Island, had hastened to array themselves in the invaders' forces. In the roll of infamy which tradition has preserved, the name of Carpenter is prominent, as a traitor who guided the enemy through the narrow and intricate country roads. Whether this tory-corps was commanded by a refugee officer, or by one of foreign birth, it is scarcely possible now to learn; and not less obscure is the nature of its service on that day.

Lord Stirling's line at this time formed two sides of a triangle, of which the hypothenuse was a line drawn from the Flatbush road, near its junction with the Porte road, to the shore of the bay, near the foot of Twenty-third street. The advanced angle at the centre was yet unprotected by the two-gun battery which had been ordered up. From this point to the shore of Gowanus bay was a distance of half a mile, along which the front was now warmly engaged. The right wing, resting on the bay, occupied the curving road which has already been described as passing over Bluckie's Barracks.

The security of this position from an assault in front, increased by a salt creek setting up into the land four or five hundred feet, made it one of no insignificant strength; so that later in the day the torrent of war sweeping around it left it unassailed. From the top of the hills the line bent northerly, along the high ground, to near the

junction of Fifth avenue and Third street. This part of the line was held by reserves — a portion of the Delaware battalion, and such supporting troops as Putnam could spare from the intrenchments.

The left wing, it will be seen, occupied a long irregular line, in which were breaks of perilous length, of which the Hessians later in the day took fatal advantage. In consequence of the peculiar formation of the line, the extreme left wing was nearer to the extreme right than to the centre, and when called into action to reinforce the front, actually exchanged positions. From this circumstance the accounts of the Gowanus battle have been found so conflicting as to be almost incomprehensible, and its varying phases can only be thus explained. It was in consequence of this that a portion of the Delaware battalion met and repulsed the advanced squads of the Second British grenadiers on the extreme left, near Tenth street and Fifth avenue.

While Stirling's line was forming, the enemy advanced upon Atlee in such force that, after a sharp conflict, he was compelled to retreat a short distance, to Bluckie's Barracks, then covered with forest trees.

At this moment Kichline's riflemen had arrived; and, taking position along a hedge at the foot of the hills, they opened an effective fire upon the light troops of the British, which occupied the orchard from which Atlee had been driven. Opportunely for the enemy, his advance had enabled him to occupy a hedge bordering a stone wall, which extended along Stirling's front, a few minutes before Kichline's arrival. For two hours, heavy skirmishing continued between these light troops, and here, tradition says, the enemy met with considerable loss from the American

rifles. Several of the old inhabitants of Gowanus, who visited the battle-ground after the retreat of the Americans, have left their positive testimony upon this point.

While Kichline's rifles were repelling the enemy's light troops, Capt. Carpenter had, with much difficulty, brought two field-pieces into position upon the hill, and opened fire upon the enemy's cover. The combined fire of Kichline's rifles, the musketry volleys on the right, and the plunging shot from Carpenter's guns, made the position so hot that the British advance was compelled to retreat upon the main body, and the orchard was immediately re-occupied by Atlee's battalion.

The British General met this resistance with a fire from two guns only, although at one time he advanced a howitzer to within three hundred yards of the right of the Americans. Another two-gun battery was sent into the woods on their left, where it took up a position about a third of a mile distant. Without material change in the front of either army, the contest continued for six hours, although the enemy outnumbered the Americans five to one. It is now known that Gen. Grant had received orders not to push Stirling's division, but merely to keep it in check. The British line of battle in front of that division changed but little, therefore, during the morning.

One of Gen. Grant's brigades was formed in two lines, opposite to the American right; and the remainder of his force extended, in a single line, through the Greenwood Cemetery hills, in front of the rest of Stirling's line. Thus ever threatening an advance, but still appearing to warily decline it, while exposed to the deadly fire of the American riflemen, the British General tormented his foe with

the ceaseless apprehension of an immediate assault. No warning had yet reached the American commander concerning the purpose of this threatening hesitation. To us looking back upon it, it has a dark and portentous significance, more impressive and awe-inspiring than the fiercest shock of battle. That long thin line of Stirling's command stood strained and nerved for the mad rush of combat, until the very waiting had fatally exhausted the energies of his men. For two long hours succeeding the retirement of the enemy's light troops, nothing but the exchange of cannon shot at long range had occupied the attention of the belligerents, except when the distant roar of musketry and field guns told that Gen. Sullivan's troops had work in hand.

Thus stood affairs in this part of the battle-field at 9 o'clock, A.M., when the thunder of great guns on the bay gave notice that a new enemy had arrived upon the scene of action, and was adding another element of dread to the fast accumulating horrors of the day. The Roebuck, man-of-war, had with great difficulty and labor at length crept within range of the redoubt on Red Hook, and a combat at once opened between them.

Admiral Lord Howe had early in the day attempted to bring his vessels up the bay, into supporting distance; but a strong north wind, combining with the ebb tide, prevented them from passing more than a mile or two above the Narrows. From the mast-head of the ships the engagement of Grant's column was plainly visible to their crews, and their eagerness to participate in the contest was doubtless but little less than that of their Admiral, while his anxiety for the success of his brother's move-

ments, rendered doubly hazardous by the uncertainty of a night attack, was very great. Every effort was therefore made to bring the fleet into a position for taking part in the engagement. But Lord Howe, convinced at last of the futility of further trial, reluctantly gave the signal to come to anchor.

Had the attempt succeeded, and the terrible broadsides of five men-of-war been opened upon the wavering line of militia, the contest, which was so soon to terminate in slaughter and defeat, would have had a quicker and a still bloodier close. Anchored at less than three-fourths of a mile from the scene of conflict, two hundred guns would have added their terrors to a battle-field around which so dense and fiery a gloom was even now gathering. As the morning advanced, the guns of the Roebuck, which had led the fleet four or five miles, opened upon the redoubt at Red Hook, the artillerymen of which had made several efforts to reach her with their long-range cannon. What was the effect of their fire upon the Roebuck is not positively known; but she could have been only slightly injured, as a few days after she took part in the attack upon the American lines on Manhattan Island. The redoubt, however, did not escape uninjured from the fire of the Roebuck; as Cols. Mifflin and Grayson, who visited it on the next day, found it greatly damaged.

The roar of ordnance from the little redoubt on Red Hook, answered by the thunder of the great guns from the decks of the Roebuck, far on the right; the crash of Grant's well served artillery in front, gallantly but feebly returned by the two-gun battery on Greenwood heights; the persistent duel between Sullivan's and De Heister's cannon

and rifles, which during four hours of combat had not changed position on the left—all combined to convince Stirling that he was well maintaining his post, and that the advance of the enemy was everywhere checked. Between 10 and 11 o'clock an incident occurred, however, which, had he been fully informed of the character of the enemy's troops engaged, should have awakened distrust.

The Delaware battalion, under Colonel Haslett, composed largely of raw Irishmen who had still to be taught how to load a musket, had remained in reserve on the left of Stirling's line, near the Porte road. At 11 o'clock they were ordered to the front, to reinforce the centre and left, now becoming weak and thin under the fire of five times their number for nearly six hours. At this time Admiral Howe was reinforcing Grant with two thousand men, landed from boats in Bennet's Cove; and it was to resist their attack that the Delaware reserve was ordered up.

Detachments from De Heister's column, which had been pushed forward through the wood from the hills near the Porte road, with the intention of forming a junction with Grant, whose position was readily ascertained by the firing, encountered the left of the Delaware battalion near Tenth street and Fourth Avenue, at about the same time that the British were landing from the boats. One of these detachments, commanded by Capt. Wragg, mistaking the Delaware soldiers for Hessian troops, and approaching so near as to be incapable of retreat, surrendered.

Lieut. Popham was detached with a guard to convey the prisoners to the lines; and he graphically describes his march from the high ground to the salt meadow, and his passage across the mouth of Gowanus creek, in silk stock-

ings and small clothes. He and his prisoners narrowly escaped from drowning, in the deep mud and water; and, to heighten the danger, the enemy, discovering the movement, opened upon them a fire from a two-gun battery on the hills. The British Captain, hoping from this circumstance that a rescue would be effected, paused in the middle of the creek; but he relinquished his hopes on being informed by Popham that he would be instantly put to death should he attempt an escape. The gallant young Lieutenant would not relinquish the British officers, and their accoutrements, although sinking in the mud and water, and had the good fortune to arrive safely in the lines with his prisoners.

This incident, of Wragg's capture, was occasioned by an order from the Colonel of the Second British grenadiers, which had received several severe fires from the Delaware battalion without returning them, as its blue uniform, faced with red, very nearly resembled the Hessian dress. Capt. Wragg was despatched to inform the supposed German corps of its mistake. Before the fatal error was discovered, the grenadiers had lost several officers and men; but they were able soon afterward to obtain their revenge, by attacking and dispersing this small and untrained detachment.

While Stirling and Grant are parrying or receiving blows, and the Roebuck menaces the Red Hook redoubt, let us turn to another portion of the field, on the Flatbush hills, where sunrise had found Sullivan in arms awaiting his Hessian foe. The morning which broke upon the scene disclosed no change in the position of the enemy. For five mornings had Sullivan's detachment awaited the

shock of battle; and the long mid-summer days had waned and closed without its coming. But on this, indications of its nearness made every soldier conscious that the sun of that day would not set on a bloodless field. During the night the rattle of a skirmish fire had occasionally been heard, two or three miles away upon the right, somewhere near the Red Lion Tavern. The head of the enemy's column was doubtless feeling its way into the lines in that direction; but as the pattering fire approaching no nearer, the soldiers thought "Old Put" was probably holding the attacking force in check. As the sun crept above the horizon, the scattering, irregular discharges from the Greenwood heights had grown in volume into heavy and regular volleys, to which soon after was added the boom of cannon. Meantime, ominous movements in the plain below indicated that Sullivan's men would not long be idle. As the vast camp of the enemy came clearly into view, no indications appeared of the absence from it of eight thousand troops, and no thought of a movement so threatening as this vacancy would have revealed seems to have crossed the mind of officer or private.

It was not long before the movement of Gen. De Heister's command left no room for doubt of his intentions. The hour had arrived for his assault; and, presently, long columns of the German troops were seen forming in the streets and fields of Flatbush. The yagers deployed right and left of the Brooklyn road as skirmishers, and the grenadiers were pushed forward to support them. In the centre of the advance several pieces of artillery took position, and at the distance of half a mile opened fire upon the American lines. Here De Heister's main column

halted, as if awaiting further preparations for the assault; and his martinet subordinates dressed their companies in line, as if upon drill parade. The ardor of Col. Donop was too great for endurance of this long delay, of the important significance of which the Hessian subordinates, as well as the Americans, were probably entirely ignorant. Col. Donop solicited and obtained permission from General De Heister to lead forward the sharpshooters and grenadiers. The fame of this brave officer is clouded by the atrocities of this day, which he sanctioned by his presence, if he did not even command their perpetration. The latter has been charged, and never denied. Fate pursued him to Fort Mifflin and Red Bank, where, a year afterwards, he fell a victim to his own cruelty, having announced to the garrison that if they resisted his assault no quarter would be granted.

His eagerness on this occasion was not permitted to thwart the plans of Gen. Howe, whose orders to Gen. De Heister were peremptory that the Americans must not be pressed, until the flanking column of Sir Henry Clinton had given the preconcerted signal that he had cut the line of their communications with the intrenchments. Col. Donop was therefore not permitted at this time to press the American riflemen further than to the edge of the woods, where a sharp skirmish, at medium rifle-range, was kept up for nearly two hours. In the meantime the guns of the redoubt were replying to De Heister's cannon, although their small calibre, and probably inefficient service, permitted them to be of but little use.

It was already 9 o'clock, when a sound was heard that carried dismay into the ranks of the harassed American

troops. Above the spattering fire of rifle shots, and the roar of light field-pieces, was heard the booming of two heavy guns, far in the rear, proceeding from a point near the junction of the Flatbush and Bedford roads.

The appalling fact that the enemy had turned the American flank, and was now pressing upon their rear, became more evident when the bands of De Heister burst forth into the wildest strains of martial music; and, in an instant, his heavy columns, so long repressed, wheeled right and left into line of battle, and pushed steadily forward. The long inaction was over. The mystery which had masked this ever-threatening yet ever delayed assault was suddenly cleared away. Gen Sullivan, whose anxiety to pierce it could no longer be restrained, had, not long before, at the head of four hundred men, pushed forward on a reconnoissance. Unfortunately for us at this day, this gallant General, in his brief account of his misfortune, made long after to Congress, was more anxious to inculpate Gen. Putnam than to render a careful report of the changing aspects of that fatal field. Embittered by the elevation of Putnam to the chief command, as his own letters fully attest, he exhibited a petty resentment for which nothing but his self-devoted courage could atone. What were the direction and purpose of his reconnoissance we can now only conjecture. The fact that his left was more open to attack, not only from the isolation of those regiments which formed it, but from his belief that the extension of Stirling's left gave complete security to the other portion of his line, renders it nearly certain that his reconnoissance was made to the east of the centre, along the slope of the hills in front of his lines. The

period chosen for the movement was most unfortunate; as twelve thousand of the enemy's troops were closing around his little army, separated, by an impassable cordon, from its leader, and from its lines of retreat.

Col. Donop, at the head of the Hessian riflemen and grenadiers, now dashed forward to the south of the Porte road, and entered the woods, driving the American riflemen before him, from the logs, or clumps of trees and thickets, behind which they had lain concealed. These slight covers were immediately occupied by the yagers, who had been instructed to imitate the American tactics of irregular skirmishers; and, accordingly, after delivering their fire from such points as offered concealment or protection, these active troops sprang rapidly forward to similar covers in advance. The grenadiers, with fixed bayonets, followed close behind, in well-dressed lines, which they were as solicitous to preserve, while they charged through the thick woods, as if they had been upon parade.

The advanced riflemen of Sullivan were thus soon driven in upon the main body, now greatly weakened by the withdrawal of the four hundred men engaged in the General's reconnoissance.

Nearly five hours of conflict, less sanguinary than they had been exhausting, had now elapsed; and during this time the overwhelming force of the enemy, whose progress we have previously traced, had, as we have shown, unconsciously to the Americans, gathered upon their rear and flanks.

Sir Henry Clinton's and Cornwallis' massive columns, more than three times outnumbering their opponents, had

marched from Bedford to the junction of the Flatbush and Jamaica roads, across which they had pushed their advance guards. The British line, therefore, now stretched for nearly two miles between these points, at the distance of half a mile from the rear of the Americans, who, by this silent and masterly movement, had been fatally inclosed within the encompassing folds. The advance guard — thoroughly informed by the loyalists, who had escaped to Staten Island and now accompanied the column, of every wood-road, by-path, and farm-lane — advanced with almost the rapidity and secrecy of Indian warriors, inclosing the outposts with a force which rendered resistance useless, even where it continued to be possible.

Every step of the movement was performed with the coolness and deliberation of the parade-ground; and, as each emergency had been contemplated, it was already half disarmed of its danger.[1]

The air was still vibrating with the boom of the signal guns, when the British troops in the American rear sprang forward to the charge. The light troops, the stragglers, the wounded, the rear-guard, and all the mob which hovers in the rear of battle, were swept away like chaff before the tornado. On the extreme left, near Bedford, a heavy body of men was pushed forward to cut the American lines at the Clove road.

The important task of occupying and guarding the range of hills from this point to the Jamaica road had been intrusted, as we have seen, to Col. Miles. In addi-

[1] When it is recollected that it was a marked characteristic of our Dutch citizens to be thoroughly independent, even in things of such common necessity as wagon roads, and that every farm had its own private lane, bounded often

tion to his regiment of Pennsylvanians, he had been reinforced by some of the Kings County militia; and their defection may have increased the carnage of this fatal day.

Scarcely ten minutes could have been occupied in the short march before the American lines were pierced, and Colonel Miles' men were flying in the wildest panic and dismay. What desperate efforts for defense, what gallant though unavailing self-devotion, were exhibited, we know only from tradition; but that some were shamefully negligent is too painfully certain. That Colonel Miles was completely surprised, by an enemy who had for six hours been marching in his rear, is not susceptible of denial or doubt; though he procured a statement to be credited for the time, that he had fought so bravely and persistently as to break a passage through the enemy's lines, by which great numbers of his men were able to escape. His reliance upon the fidelity of the Kings County militia may have led him into a fatal confidence. But the heavy firing on his right, which told him that his comrades were engaged with the enemy, should have made him circumspect and wary regarding his own position.

On all sides the enemy was now closing around the feeble bands. Vast masses of fresh troops stretched far beyond their flanks on front and rear. The whole line of De Heister's army was advancing, in three divisions, preserving their Old World forms, and severity of drill tactics, with the utmost exactness, even in these American forests. With drums and fifes sounding the charge, and regimental

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by dykes or stone walls, overgrown with thickets and wild vines, it is easy to comprehend how a foe could make such stealthy approaches, especially when conducted by some of the proprietors of these lane-skirted farms.

colors flying, while the rebel battery was firing upon them at short range, and the whole force of American riflemen and infantry was engaged, the Hessian line was regularly halted, at short distances, and re-formed, before it was permitted to advance. There was a terrible intrepidity in this foppish precision which was not without its effect upon the Americans. Overwhelmed by the numbers and the discipline of the foe, their redoubt was entered, and the weak line of fortifications was carried at the point of the bayonet. The rifles of the Americans were no longer of use; the length of time required to ram down the well-patched ball permitted the opportunity of only two or three shots before the enemy had closed upon them; and, in the impetuous onset of a charge, a clubbed rifle was a poor defense against a dozen bayonets. Many of the brave fellows fell in the intrenchments, the Hessians in several instances pinning them to the trees.[1] It was no longer a battle; it was a rout, and a massacre. Squads of the Americans retired rapidly in the direction of the Bedford road, but only to be met by the advancing columns of Clinton's and Cornwallis's troops.

Warned by the heavy firing in their rear that their position had been turned, the troops of the two regiments, on the extreme left of Sullivan's line, came hurrying forward to retreat by the same road; and they were met by the fugitives of the right, retiring from Cornwallis' front.

De Heister's troops had paused on the summit of the hill, and here, he says, they again formed in line, as if upon

[1] The Hessian Col. Von Heeringen, makes this statement, explicitly enough, in his letter to Col. Von Lossberg: "The enemy was covered by almost impenetrable brushwood, lines of abatis, and redoubts. The greater

parade. The grenadiers, and skirmishers, who had driven the rebel enemy from his lines, were the only troops who had really been in action. The regiments in the rear had mounted the hill with shouldered muskets, dragging their cannon with them to the abandoned line of intrenchments.

Colonel Donop and Captain Wreden were still pushing forward their skirmishers on the left; but they were now met by the three regiments of Americans, broken by the onset of Cornwallis' brigades, which had advanced along a line reaching from the present intersection of Flatbush and Fulton avenues half way to Bedford. Though broken into a flying mob, the Americans had not ceased to fight. The malignant passions of both armies had been inflamed against each other by the most crafty and fatal falsehoods. The credulous and kindly Germans, by the art of the British officers, as the letters of these frankly avow, had been led to believe that the American soldier was an implacable and savage warrior, who never gave or accepted quarter. The latter had also been led to believe his Hessian antagonist a brutal and inhuman wretch, whom it was necessary, for his own safety, to put to death.[1]

Gen. Sullivan had hastened to return, as soon as the sound of firing announced the opening of the conflict; but,

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part of the riflemen were pierced to the trees with bayonets. These dreadful people ought rather to be pitied than feared. They always require a quarter of an hour to load a rifle, and in the mean time they feel the effects of our balls and bayonets."— *Elking's Auxiliaries in America.* Document 40.

[1] "The Hessians and our brave Highlanders gave no quarter, and it was a fine sight to see with what alacrity they dispatched the rebels with their bayonets, after we had surrounded them so that they could not resist.

"We took care to tell the Hessians that the rebels had resolved to give no quarter to them in particular; which made them fight desperately, and put all to death who fell into their hands."— *Extract from a letter from an officer in Fraser's battalion.* Document 32.

finding himself cut off from the main body, he was now fighting vigorously, but despairingly, the troops in front of him. Gen. De Heister says that Sullivan attempted to reinforce Col. Heard, who commanded the riflemen on the American left, and who had been driven back by Col. Donop's yagers and grenadiers; but this is scarcely possible, from the intervention of almost the whole Hessian division between him and Heard's position.

Driven out from the woods upon the open plain, in groups of fifty or sixty men, and in full view of the troops which garrisoned the forts, the flying Americans were met by squadrons of British dragoons, followed by columns of infantry, which completely blocked their line of retreat. Hurled back again upon the Hessian line by the dragoon charges which smote and crushed them, without discipline, or officers who could restore it, exposed to equal lines of fire in front and rear, many of these detached squads attempted to surrender, flinging down their arms, or reversing them, to indicate submission; but they were inclosed by an infuriated enemy, indifferent to these tokens of surrender, and were inhumanly cut to pieces.[1]

Entire battalions of the Hessians rushed at the bayonet charge upon some of these groups of unarmed men, and never paused, with thrust and shot, while one of them remained alive. The cry for quarter, General De Heister says, was, in many instances, entirely unheeded by either German or English soldiers. Indeed, he says, the British

[1] An officer of high rank in the British army says in a letter: "The Americans fought manfully, and, to do them justice, could not be broken till they were outnumbered, and taken in flank, front and rear.

"*We were greatly shocked at the massacre made by the Hessians and Highlanders, after victory was decided.*"

soldier was quite as sanguinary and inhuman as his Saxon or Hessian comrade, and constantly incited these to grant no quarter. An appalling massacre thus closed the combat, over whose incidents a veil has been drawn which history has never been able to remove. The battle-field had become a scene of awful terror and flight upon the one side, and of resistless assault and merciless slaughter upon the other.

In some parts of the field, however, despair aroused the routed Americans to an energy and activity which cost the enemy the loss of many soldiers before they themselves sank in death. Groups of militia fought here and there amid the woods, surrounded by overwhelming masses of the enemy, whom they madly struggled to reach with sword and bayonet, until, one by one, they fell beneath the weight of the terrible odds. Taught by the merciless massacre of their comrades, who had attempted to surrender, they no longer implored life at the hands of the implacable foes who surrounded them.

There is no incident of the battle better attested than the massacre on the ground lying between Washington avenue and Third street. Gen. De Heister admits the truth of these atrocities, by attempting their palliation. Colonel Von Heeringen circumstantially narrates their incidents, in a letter to his friend Col. Von Lossberg.[1] The Hessian General attributes the massacre to the fierce resistance of a portion of a Pennsylvania regiment, after the Hessians

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[1] Col. Von Heeringen, a Hessian officer in command on this day, says in this letter:

"The English soldiers did not give much quarter, and constantly excited our men to do the same." — *Elking's Auxiliaries in America.* Document 40.

deemed its position incapable of defense. These unfortunate provincials had never learned the mysteries of that German military etiquette, which so nicely determines the time when it is proper to surrender. And a Hessian lieutenant says truly, in a letter of the time, that the Americans fought with halters around their necks, as they expected to be hung as rebels if they were captured. Elking narrates the rumors of the massacre which prevailed, without attempting to refute them. He states that many of the wounded Americans were bayoneted, while lying upon the ground and begging for quarter; and that it was reported that nearly two thousand Americans had been pitilessly put to death. This great exaggeration of the number slain does not disprove the alleged crime, nor does he attempt its refutation; but admits that the Hessians were greatly exasperated, and that, under the excitement, they perpetrated atrocities.

Lieut. Fitch, an officer of one of the Connecticut regiments, who was taken prisoner on the 27th, near Gowanus, has left a manuscript journal,[1] in which he gives a very curious and interesting detail of matters in relation to his own captivity. He says that his treatment by the British infantry, to whom he was a prisoner, was not specially severe, except in the matter of verbal insults; while the universal assertion of those who had been captured by the Hessians, testified to brutal and inhuman treatment received from them. Not only were the prisoners robbed of money, and valuables, but often of their clothes. One after another of the German soldiers stripped American

[1] In the possession of Mr. Charles I. Bushnell, of New York.

officers and soldiers of their various garments, until many of them were left standing entirely naked. This robbery was permitted, if not countenanced, by their officers; who seemed to look upon the plunder as the legitimate prize of war. The English soldiers, on the other hand, though profuse in verbal abuse, in no instance offered personal violence to their prisoners, or attempted robbery of their effects. Soon after the prisoners taken by the Hessians began to arrive, an American corporal, whose name Fitch mentions, was brought in with a bayonet wound in his bowels, and another in his breast, both of which he solemnly averred that he had received after surrender. His wounds were kindly dressed by an English surgeon, who treated him civilly; but he complained for two days of terrible suffering, and at the end of that time died. Another prisoner was brought in, badly wounded in his thighs; and although his wounds healed, yet he perished a few months after, of starvation and disease, on board of one of the deadly prison ships. Lieut. Fitch states that a prisoner, with whom he was acquainted, was brought before Gen. De Heister himself, who became greatly enraged against him for some offense, probably for refusing to answer his questions regarding the American forces. The Hessian General, in a burst of passion, seized his prisoner by the hair, shaking him violently, and belaboring him stoutly with hearty cuffs.

Gen. Sullivan maintained his unequal contest for two hours, but, cut off from retreat, or connection with the main body, he was compelled to surrender. At what part of the field, or even at what hour of the day, this took place, we have nothing on record to afford us any light. At 11

o'clock, A. M., the contest on the hills had nearly closed. A few squads had broken through the dense lines of the British by desperate fighting, and reached the fortifications. Others fled along the hills, and hid themselves in swamps and thickets; from which many of them were routed and captured after the battle, while some, more fortunate, escaped. Considerable bodies of the fugitive troops had fought their way through Colonel Donop's line of skirmishers, across the Porte road, to the neighborhood of the Cortelyou house. Pursued closely by Cornwallis and the Hessians, now pouring upon them by the Porte road, they fled across the meadows to the creek. The Hessian riflemen spread along the hills towards Stirling's left; while the victorious troops of the British right wing closed in by columns over the scene of the late massacre.

Col. Miles, surprised in his camp by the enemy, as we have before seen, had been compelled to suffer the misfortune of beholding his command cut to pieces or captured, and of being himself, with every officer of his regiment, taken prisoner. He was compelled ever after to bear the taunt of having been the cause of the defeat of the day, although he contrived to procure the mention of his name with praise for his gallant resistance. He was undoubtedly so far to blame that nothing but the hazardous position of the American army for many weeks afterward, with the irregularity and confusion of both military and civil authority, prevented his trial for gross neglect of duty. And for such he should, if convicted, have suffered death.

As the communication with the fortified lines was now completely severed, by the interposition of heavy masses of the British troops, no other route of escape was pos-

sible than through the narrow strip of woods lying between the Porte road and the salt meadows. This, too, was occupied by the light troops of the Hessian column; but the impetuosity of the despairing survivors of the massacre carried them through Donop's thin skirmish line, and the fugitives were now pouring through the roads in the neighborhood of the Porte road, across the narrow pass over Freeke's mill-dam. Thronged with the flying crowd of men, this remnant of an army, already shattered in the awful crash of battle, had there another horror added to its fate. The Hessian guns, which, with German tenacity, they had dragged along their route through the woods, hurried into position upon the hills near Ninth avenue, were soon hurling their balls into the dense masses of fugitives that crowded the dam. To escape this plunging fire, great numbers of the flying soldiers diverged to the south, and attempted to retreat across the creeks and mill-dams. As we are left in ignorance of the total number of our soldiers engaged in this battle under Sullivan, we can only conjecture, from vague allusions in the journals of the day, what proportion of the Americans effected an escape in this manner. Many were shot, while struggling through the mud and water, and it is not improbable that some were drowned; but local traditions do not corroborate the statements regarding the extent of the loss of life incurred in this manner, which were current at the time.

Thus, at 11 o'clock, on this fatal day, the broken and flying remnants of Sullivan's division had melted away, before the fierceness of the British assault and the Hessian massacre. Along the space of ground included between Washington avenue and Third street, the low ground in

the neighborhood of Greene and Fourth avenues, and the heights overlooking Flatbush, lay the bodies of nearly one thousand men, slain in the shock of battle, or by subsequent murder. A few hundreds of the Americans were either flying through the morasses and thickets, or, permitted by some caprice of mercy to surrender, were now prisoners of war.

An instance of individual bravery, allied to desperation, was exhibited on this day by a private in a Massachusetts regiment, named John Callender. His history affords a most extraordinary example of fortitude under a crushing misfortune, and of a self-devotion which seemed equally stimulated by courage and despair. At the battle of Bunker Hill, several of the farmer-soldiers who had been elected by their neighbors to the command of a company, and who there for the first time saw the carnage of battle, yielded to a natural human shrinking from its horrors. Among those who were denounced as cowards by the enraged Putnam was Capt. John Callender, who had commanded one of the companies of artillery. Putnam raved through the camp at Roxbury like a madman, declaring at head-quarters that he would leave the service unless Callender was cashiered, or shot. His ferocity blinded him to the noble qualities in the possession of which Capt. Callender was greatly the superior of his accuser; and a committee of Congress, appointed to inquire into the truth of the report that some officers had been guilty of misconduct, yielded to the vehemence of Gen. Putnam, and reported in favor of submitting the inquiry to a Court Martial. By that tribunal the accused was found guilty of cowardice in battle, and sentenced to be cashiered. Wash-

reached him. The capture of Capt. Wragg and his grenadiers, who had pressed some distance in advance of Cornwallis' column, should have informed him before, as we have said, of the danger of his position.

It may here be stated that the manner in which the capture of Wragg's command had been effected by the Americans enraged the British, who pretended to see in the accidental similarity of uniform a treacherous design. The affair of shooting or capturing the soldiers of an enemy, who had approached with the idea of meeting friends, was styled treachery, and furnished a pretext for succeeding atrocities. Indeed, so eagerly have the British writers endeavored to palliate the cruelty of this day's slaughter, that they have seized upon the incident of Captain Wragg's capture to justify all the massacres perpetrated on the battle-field.

Fired with a common emulation of slaughter, Hessian and British troops were now pressing forward, to inclose Stirling's division between them and Grant, in the same fatal embrace which had crushed the life out of Sullivan's corps. The right wing of the enemy, commanded by Lord Cornwallis in person, was hastening forward, to occupy the junction of the Porte and Gowanus roads. Cornwallis had proceeded as far as the Cortelyou house, which is, beyond a doubt, the dwelling sometimes spoken of as a 'stone' and sometimes as a 'brick' house, of both of which materials it is constructed. This house Cornwallis proceeded at once to occupy as a redoubt. It thus became apparent to Lord Stirling that his position was no longer defensible. What an appalling change from the confidence and elation of an hour before!

SITE OF THE ASSAULT ON THE BATTERY AT THE CORTELYOU HOUSE

BY THE MARYLAND BATTALION.

The gigantic extent, and the consummate skill, of the British combination, was apparent to the General at a glance. The noble soul of the generous soldier at once impelled him to the great sacrifice, which, at such an hour, is all that is left for a defeated commander. The onset of the victorious foe must be checked, while his retreating columns toiled through the salt marshes, and across the deep tide-water creek, in their rear. To the heroic mind of Stirling there was no necessity for reflection upon the decision. In such minds instinct is a safer guide than is the maturest judgment in others. The decision is a species of inspiration. Fortunately for his purpose, the noblest instruments for his design were at hand.

The Maryland regiment, now commanded by Major Guest, some portions of which had, from the peculiar formation of Stirling's line, fought on the right wing, although part of the left, was still nearly intact, and was burning with patriotism, and the desire of distinction. This body of young men, sons of the best families of Catholic Maryland, had been emulous of the praise of being the best drilled and disciplined of the Revolutionary forces; and their high spirit, their courage, their self-devotion, as well as the discipline of which they were proud, were now to be proved in the fierce furnace of battle. Flinging himself at the head of these brave lads, who on that day for the first time saw the flash of an enemy's guns, Stirling determined to stem the advance of the foe.[1]

The little band, now hardly numbering four hundred men, prepared for an assault upon five times their number,

[1] Lord Stirling says, in his letter of August 29, to Washington: "In order to render the escape of the main body across the creek more practicable, I

of the best troops of the invading army, who were inflamed with all the arrogance of successful combat.

Forming, hurriedly, on ground in the vicinity of Fifth avenue and Tenth street, the light column advanced along the Gowanus road into the jaws of battle, with unwavering front. Artillery ploughed their fast-thinning ranks, with the awful bolts of war; infantry poured its volleys of musket-balls, in almost solid sheets of lead upon them; and, from the adjacent hills, the deadly Hessian yagers sent swift messengers of death into many a manly form. Still, above the roar of cannon, musketry, and rifles, was heard the shout of their brave leaders, "Close up! Close up!" and again the staggering yet unflinching files, grown fearfully thin, drew together, and turned their stern young faces to their country's foe.

At the head of this devoted band marched their General, to whom even victory had now become less important than an honorable death which might purchase the safe retreat of his army. Amid all the terrible carnage of the hour there was no hurry, no confusion, only a grim despair, which their courage and self-devotion dignified into martyrdom.

The advanced bodies of the enemy were driven back upon the Cortelyou house — now become a formidable redoubt — from the windows of which the leaden hail thinned the patriot ranks as they approached. Lord Cornwallis hurriedly brought two guns into position, near one corner

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found it absolutely necessary to attack a body of troops commanded by Lord Cornwallis, posted at the house near the Upper Mills, which I instantly did, with about half of Smallwood's regiment, first ordering all the other troops to make the best of their way across the creek."

of the house, and added their canister and grape to the tempest of death.

At last the little column halted, powerless to advance, in the face of this murderous fire, yet disdaining to retreat with the disgrace of a flight. Again and again these self-devoted heroes closed their ranks over the bodies of their dead comrades, and still turned their faces to the foe. But the limit of human endurance had for the time been reached, and the shattered column was driven back. Their task was not, however, yet fully performed.

As Stirling looked across the salt meadows, away to the scene of his late struggle at Bluckie's Barracks, and saw the confused masses of his countrymen crowding the narrow causeway over Freeke's mill-pond, or struggling through the muddy tide-stream, he felt how precious to their country's liberty were the lives of his retreating soldiers; and again he nerved himself for a combat which he knew could only prove a sacrifice. Once more he called upon the survivors of the previous dreadful assault, and again the noble young men gathered around their General.

How sadly he must have looked upon them—scarcely more than boys—so young, so brave, and to meet again the pitiless iron hail!

The impetus and spirit of this charge carried the battalion over every obstacle, quite to the house. The gunners were driven from their battery, and Cornwallis seemed about to abandon the position; but the galling fire from the interior of the house, and from the adjacent high ground, with the overwhelming numbers of the enemy who were now approaching, again compelled a retreat.

Three times more the survivors rallied, flinging themselves upon the constantly reinforced ranks of the enemy; but the combat, so long and so unequally sustained, was now hastening to its close. A few minutes more of this destroying fire, and two hundred and fifty-six of the noble youth of Maryland were either prisoners in the hands of the enemy, or lay side by side in that awful mass of dead and dying. The sacrifice had been accomplished, and the flying army had been saved from complete destruction. Amid the carnage Stirling was left almost alone, and, scorning to yield himself to a British subject, he sought the Hessian General De Heister, and only to him would he surrender his sword.

On the conical hill, within the American lines, stood the Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Washington; and, as he witnessed the assault, the repulse, and the massacre, he exclaimed in agony of heart, "Great God! what must my brave boys suffer to-day."[1] From the eminence on which he stood the termination of the last struggle of the brave Marylanders was plainly and painfully visible to him.

On the shore of Gowanus Bay sleep the remains of this noble band. They were buried on the farm of Adrian Van Brunt, who, it is said, consecrated the spot for the sacred deposit; so that, while occupied by him, the plough and the axe never desecrated it. Out upon the broad surface of the level marsh rose a little island of dry ground, then and long after covered with trees and undergrowth.

[1] This height upon which Washington stood was crowned by a redoubt, and occupied the block now bounded by Court, Clinton, Atlantic, and Pacific streets.

Around this little mound, scarcely an acre in extent, clustered a few of the survivors of the fatal field and of the remorseless swamp, and here the heroic dead were brought, and laid beneath its sod, after the storm of battle had swept by. Tradition says that all the dead of the Maryland and Delaware battalions who fell on and near the meadow, were buried in this miniature island, which promised at that day the seclusion and sacred quiet which befit the resting place of the heroic dead. Third avenue intersects the westerly end of the mound; and Seventh and Eighth streets indicate two of its sides.

The grade of these streets carries them much above the highest part of this burial mound; and now, far below the present surface, mingled with the remains of the servile sons of Africa whose burial ground it also was, lies the dust of those brave boys who found death easier than flight, and gave their lives to save their countrymen.

The very dust of those streets is sacred. And our busy hum of commerce, our grading of city lots, our speculations in houses reared on the scenes of such noble valor, and over the mouldering forms of these young heroes, seem almost sacrilege. Rebel tongues have chanted the refrain of "Maryland, my Maryland;" but they cannot rob the nation of the sad sweet thought: 'She is Maryland, *our* Maryland.' Her dead on the field of battle are our dead. Her fame and her glory are our pride and our rejoicing.[1]

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[1] Col. Smallwood has been understood to say, in his letter of Oct. 12, that the Marylanders lost two hundred and fifty-six men; but in his subsequent communications he makes no mention of the number, except to remind the Convention that he had already sent a list of the killed, wounded and missing. His reticence regarding the loss of one-half of his battalion is unexplained, except upon the supposition that he considered the list as affording

We weep over her fallen, in the cause of liberty; and we do not cease to honor them, because of their kinsmen who would have robbed her of her fame by allying her to the coalition of liberticides. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*

The loss of the Americans, in the engagements on the 27th of August, is as difficult to be ascertained as the number of troops. Washington never made any official report of the battle, other than to state in one of his letters that his loss was about one thousand. That this was far below his real loss, the Commander-in-Chief must have known as well as we, with all the evidence before us. The panic, and ungovernable despondency, consequent upon the disaster, which overwhelmed the army and the public, compelled the concealment of the actual extent of the loss. Washington could make this partial statement of his loss, without rendering himself liable to the charge of duplicity; as, in his letter to the continental Congress, he would only be expected to report the loss of the regulars, the only troops under the control of that body.

Gen. Howe returns, in his official report, a detailed statement of his own and the American losses in the battle; and the minuteness of his military report entitles it to our credit, far above vague summaries. The roll of prisoners in Gen. Howe's possession enumerates one thousand and

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sufficient particulars, and was so much offended by a censure of the Convention, that he would not proffer any remarks upon the sad fate of his battalion. Contemporary writers, however, distinctly state the number of the killed, wounded and missing of the Maryland battalion to have been more than two hundred and fifty. In a letter written Sept. 1st, 1776, the writer says; "The Maryland battalion lost two hundred and fifty-nine men, amongst whom twelve were officers: Capts. Veasy and Bowey; Lieuts. Butler, Sterrit, Dent, Coursey, Morse, Prawl, Ensigns Corts and Fernandas. Who are killed, and who prisoners, is yet uncertain."

ninety-seven; or somewhat more than the whole number which Washington admits as killed, wounded, and missing. Gen. Howe estimates the whole number of troops which the Americans lost in the battle, at three thousand three hundred; which is evidently an exaggeration, as this is not far from the entire force of those directly engaged. Stedman estimates the number "killed, wounded, and missing," at two thousand. Left completely in the dark, as we are, regarding the numerical strength of even a single regiment, before or after the battle, except by the estimate of its officers, we have little better than conjecture to afford us any light upon the loss of the Americans on this disastrous day. There is, however, little doubt, that in killed, missing, and prisoners, it was not far from two thousand. The British lost about seventy killed, of whom five were officers, two hundred and eighty wounded, and twenty-one prisoners, making a total loss of three hundred and sixty-seven.[1]

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[1] All the letters of the period extol the courage and devotion of the Maryland battalion, and rate its loss at nearly the same number. See Documents 25 to 31.

One of these writers, after naming the same missing officers, says: "about one hundred and fifty men of Smallwood's battalion are missing." The officers give Lord Stirling the character of as brave a man as ever lived. Stedman, the British historian, says; "The Maryland Regiment suffered most severely, having lost upwards of two hundred and sixty men; which was much regretted, as that regiment was composed of young men of the best families in the country." — *Stedman's Am. War*, vol. I, p. 196; Document 42.

Gen. Howe, in his official report, says: "On the part of the King's troops, five officers, and fifty-six non-commissioned officers and rank and file, were killed; 12 officers, and 245 non-commissioned officers and rank and file, wounded; one officer, and 20 grenadiers of the marines, taken prisoners, by mistaking the enemy for Hessians. The Hessians had two privates killed, three officers, and 23 rank and file wounded."

CHAPTER VI.

The Siege of Brooklyn.

At two o'clock, on the afternoon of the day of battle, the conflict had ceased. The feeble remnant of the American army, which had continued the contest so long after success was possible, had melted away; a few survivors of the Maryland battalion had found safety in flight, across the salt marsh, every foot of whose surface was now swept by the enemy's artillery and rifle shot. The impediments with which nature had barred retreat, in this direction, had been increased by the labor of man. From a narrow tide channel, which emptied into Gowanus creek, below Denton's mill-pond, Nicholas Vechte, the first proprietor of the stone house around whose walls the sanguinary conflict had just closed, had, a century before, dug a canal across the strip of marsh which intervened between the Gowanus road and the navigable waters of the creek. This artificial channel, hidden by the rank sedge and grass, formed an almost fatal barrier to escape in that direction. It was the apparent facility of crossing this narrow ditch, which lured numbers of the flying and exhausted survivors to their destruction. The tide had now risen to high water, filling the canal nearly to the level of the meadow, so that its slimy banks afforded no foothold, or support for the hands of those who struggled in its waters. In the opposite direction, to the north of the

Porte road, escape was even more impracticable; for, at this time, the Yellow mills were in flames, and the fire had communicated to the dwelling house, and to the bridges which crossed the flume and waste weir of the mill.

The mill-house was situated at the foot of Freeke's pond, the bank of which formed a road which crossed the salt meadow at this point, and passed over a bridge at each end of the dam. Turning at a sharp angle to the south, on the east side of the mill-dam, the road connected, at the distance of two or three hundred yards, with the Porte road, down which the fugitives, from both Sullivan's and Stirling's divisions were still pouring, hotly pursued by the dragoons and Hessian riflemen. The flames of the burning mill and bridges, bursting upon their view as soon as they passed the abrupt turn from the Porte road into the mill-lane, revealed the appalling fact that retreat was cut off in that direction. The cruel and selfish deed of firing the mill and bridges, was said by Col. Smallwood to have been the act of Col. Ward, commanding an eastern regiment; who, early in the retreat, had safely passed his whole command over the dam, and, in order to secure his rear from attack, had set fire to the light wooden structures, and left hundreds of his countrymen, pursued by a victorious enemy, to perish. No military necessity called for this cruel sacrifice. The passage of the long, narrow causeway, swept by an enfilading fire from the American redoubt on the hill, was too hazardous for a cautious foe to undertake it; and its destruction must have been devised by a panic-crazed brain, or prompted by a selfish and craven heart.

The sacrifice of their lives, so freely made by the generous and noble sons of Maryland, had not been made in

vain. An hour, more precious to American liberty than any other in its history, had been gained; and the retreat of many hundreds of their countrymen had been secured, across the dreadful creek and marsh, whose treacherous tide and slime now covered so many of their brave comrades. The carnage of battle could scarcely have been more destructive than the retreat; for, at this time, no vestige of an army-formation existed, and nothing remained but a mob of flying and despairing men, among whose masses officers and privates were borne undistinguished along.[1]

Let us for a moment review the scene which was exhibited in the amphitheatre, along the centre of whose arena flowed the sluggish waters of Gowanus creek. Almost the entire space from the present site of Smith street to Fourth avenue, and all that portion of the city south of Hamilton avenue, except the little neck of Red Hook, was salt marsh, whose treacherous bogs and obscure paths were intersected in every direction by deep bayous, creeks, and mill-ponds, up whose slimy channels the lazy tide was now creeping to its full.

Although nearly three-fourths of a mile in breadth, no part of this wide arena afforded shelter from the devast-

[1] Among the brave officers who fell in this battle was Col. Philip Johnson, of Sidney, New Jersey. A journal of the day contains the following notice of this officer: "In the action of Long Island, Col. Johnson, of Gen. Sullivan's division, behaved with remarkable intrepidity and heroism. By the well directed fire of his regiment the enemy were several times repulsed, and lanes were made through them, till he received a ball in his breast which put an end to the life of as gallant an officer as ever commanded a battalion." Gen. Sullivan, who was near him when he fell, says, "No officer could have behaved with greater firmness and bravery throughout the action than Col. Johnson." He sacrificed his life in defense of his country, and let his memory be dear to every American patriot, as long as the spirit which led him to the field shall actuate the sons of freedom.—*Manuscripts of Gen. Johnson.*

ating fire which swept over it. The semicircle of hills to the east, from which the Americans had been driven, was thronged with the forces of the victorious and exultant enemy. On every knoll, of sufficient area, were planted his death-dealing cannon. Each clump of trees, and little eminence, held a squad of Hessian riflemen; while, in advance of all, were pressing on the solid columns of British infantry and grenadiers, which constantly, as opportunity presented, deployed in line of battle, and delivered their terrible volleys of musketry.

Half a mile to the north-west of the meadow's edge, on the ridge of ground that stretched from where Pacific and Court streets intersect, to the junction of Fulton and Bond streets, rose the low parapet of the fortifications. These, and the walls of Fort Greene, near the present crossing of Dean and Nevins streets, were thronged with anxious and sorrowing spectators. Along the space of ground that intervened between the line of entrenchments and the East River, several detachments, from the army in New York, were hastening to defend the passage of the creek, and to effect a diversion in favor of the broken troops by threatening an attack upon the enemy.

Washington had early in the day exerted himself to the utmost in bringing over troops from New York, to reinforce Sullivan and Stirling; and now that their forces were utterly crushed, he still strove to cover the retreat of the fugitives, and to strengthen his lines. Threatened, as these were, with imminent assault by a heavy British column under Gen. Robertson, Washington's prudence forbade the withdrawal from them of a single man, even to prevent the slaughter of his soldiers.

On the high ground to the west of Freeke's mill-pond, just opposite the terminus of the Porte road, sat, on his war horse, the American Commander, his great heart wrung with anguish at the dreadful scene before him. A soldier, stationed near the General on that day,[1] has left the record of an incident worthy to be preserved, which exhibits the characteristic submission of all the natural emotions of the soul of Washington to the sterner behests of his judgment. While the General was communicating his orders to Lieut. Col. Hart,[2] then commanding at this point, his attention was directed to the struggles of an unfortunate fugitive, apparently an inhabitant of the Island, who, in endeavoring to escape from the approaching enemy, had been firmly fixed in the mud of the pond. It was evident that, without assistance, his condition was hopeless; and, in spite of the exposure to the enemy's fire, and the danger of being inextricably fastened in the tenacious slime, numbers of the men petitioned for liberty to go to his aid. The guns from the redoubt on the sand hill, known afterwards as Fort Boerum, swept the surface of the pond, and the ground beyond, so as to forbid close pursuit by the British; but Washington was now well aware that their attack would not be long delayed, and he refused to permit the rescue. The attempt, he said, would place the rescuers in the same predicament, where they would certainly be captured or slain. Our tender hearted soldier says, regretfully, that he never learned the fate of the poor fellow, whose misfortune warmly enlisted

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[1] Hezekiah Munsell: see Document 48.

[2] Col. Grey was sick in New York, where he soon after died.

VIEW OF FREEKES' MILLPOND AND FORT BOX.

his sympathies; but such scenes were too sadly frequent on that day.

At twelve o'clock, the detachments, which had been ordered from New York, had begun to arrive; and Washington was now engaged in pushing them forward to threatened points along the lines, and to the places on the creek and ponds where the fugitives were crossing.[1]

A Connecticut soldier[2] has given us a narration of many incidents attending the march of his regiment to the scene of slaughter, whose horrors his comrades' fears seem fully to have anticipated. Somewhere on the route from the ferry to Gowanus creek, this reinforcement passed a feeble party of artillerymen, almost frantic with their painful efforts to drag a twelve-pounder to bear upon the enemy across the creek. The brave fellows made the most earnest appeals for help in bringing the heavy piece of ordnance into position, but their entreaties were unheeded by the officers of this regiment of raw recruits, who seem to have been

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[1] Among the incidents of the battle which tradition has preserved, there is one narrated by Judge Furman so striking, that it ought not to be omitted.

"During the progress of the conflict, a detachment of the British army, while in pursuit of a party of American soldiers, marched down a lane leading from the Brick tavern to Gowanus. A number of American riflemen, to obtain a better range, posted themselves in some high trees, near the road. One of them shot the English Major Grant, who fell without his slayer being discovered. Again he loaded his deadly rifle and fired, when another officer fell; but this time his place of concealment was revealed, and a platoon ordered to advance and fire into the tree. The order was executed and the unfortunate sharp-shooter fell dead from his perch. After the battle, the two British officers were buried in a field near the spot on which they had fallen, and their graves were long protected by a fence of posts and rails where their remains still rest (1824). But as an example to the rebels, the British refused the rites of sepulture to the American rifleman, until long after, when some pious hands, in defiance of the enemy's prohibition, placed his remains in the cavity made by the uprooting of a large tree by a recent gale; and covered them with their mother earth."

[2] *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier.* Hallowell, Maine, 1820.

demented with their own panic, and to have pushed forward with the most dismal forebodings of their impending fate. The absorbing selfishness of terror had so paralyzed every sentiment of manhood in the breasts of the officers of this detachment, that they refused to aid in securing the very object of their march, because it was outside of their prescribed line of duty. Arrived at the bank of the creek, they found it thronged with their flying countrymen, the last body of whom, that had continued to resist, had just been driven into the fatal stream. Within the view, and almost within the grasp, of the reinforcing regiment, many of the fugitives sank beneath the turbid waters of the creek.

Although the mortality of that day is largely attributed to the dangerous bog and water of Gowanus creek and its ponds, yet, when it is remembered that the battery which Cornwallis had placed at the Vechte house was now pouring its discharges of grape and canister upon every point of the crossing, it is not hard to believe that most of those who fell in the creek, perished from these missiles rather than by drowning.[1] The brave fellows who had toiled so painfully in dragging the twelve-pounder through the deep sand, were now amply rewarded by the splendid results of its firing. After almost superhuman exertions in bringing their heavy piece into position, they opened fire upon Cornwallis's battery, at the stone house, and in a few minutes had the satisfaction of driving it out of range.

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[1] Mr. Garret Bergen was a lad at the period of the battle, and visited the creek subsequent to the battle. In his narration of the scenes he witnessed he always declared that but few were drowned in the creek. Such evidence is, however, far from conclusive, as all negative testimony must be. Mr. Bergen was very young, saw but a small part of the creek, and that two days after the battle, when the bodies had been removed.

The British field-pieces were probably light four and six pounders, and unable to endure the heavy shot and accurate firing of the little band of artillerists; so that although these arrived too late in the day to aid in repelling the attack of the British columns on Stirling, or to assist his devoted corps of Marylanders in their assaults on the Vechte house, they actually accomplished the result which that general designed, in driving the enemy's battery from its post.

It is probable that the firing from the redoubt at Fort Boerum also aided in the result. The letters of British officers, containing accounts of the battle of the 27th of August, speak with slight praise of the American gunnery, asserting that the balls flew high over the heads of their soldiers; but the withdrawal of a battery of four guns, before the fire of at most only an equal number, is testimony that implies a much greater skill.

At two o'clock, in the afternoon of this day, the progress of the British forces along this wide-extended battle-field, had been uninterruptedly successful. The complicated manœuvres of three great assaulting columns, had been performed with the exactness and certainty of some vast machine, whose parts were moulded and movements regulated by a skillful engineer. It is impossible not to yield admiration to the brilliancy of the British plan of battle, and the magnificent perfection of its accomplishment. It is not derogating from the military skill of Gen. Howe, to recall the fact that two months previously, the British spy, Sergeant Graham, had not only furnished the information which was indispensable to his success, but had sketched the very plan of attack which had just resulted in the defeat of the American army. But every

victorious battle-field proved a Capua to Gen. Howe; and on this occasion, his natural indolence and voluptuousness found a ready excuse for delay, in the terrible lesson of Bunker Hill. He remembered, too, that eighteen years before, at Ticonderoga, his brother, Lord George Howe, a noble and generous soldier, had fallen while advancing to assault a work which seemed only an insignificant heap of brush, but before which two thousand American and British soldiers had shared his fate.

Among the officers of his army who keenly felt the disgrace of their commander's weakness, was Brig. Gen. Robertson, a soldier of such merit as to be promoted soon after to the rank of Major General. It is probable that the jealousy, so easily aroused, between provincial and metropolitan officers, was not slumbering in the armies of these generals; for Robertson had resided in America twenty-five years, while Gen. Howe was fresh from the pomp and favor of the court. The long residence of Robertson in this country does not seem to have imbued him with the fatal respect for American military prowess which haunted the mind of his superior, as we learn from the minutes of his examination before a committee of Parliament.[1] That he entertained but little respect for that quality of Gen. Howe which his friends entitled prudence, and his enemies procrastination, is plainly deducible from his language.

While the battle on the heights overlooking Flatbush was pending, Gen. Robertson, in obedience to Howe's

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[1] The minutes of the evidence given by all the British generals during this investigation, will be found in Document 43.

orders, had remained an idle spectator, within two hundred yards of the American entrenchments. The nature of the ground, in their front, permitted his scouts to approach the works so closely as to report that they would not withstand his assault in force for a moment. Robertson repeatedly sought permission from Gen. Howe to carry the entrenchments, with his single brigade; but the imagination of the General pictured them as such formidable obstacles that he as often peremptorily refused.

In his examination before the parliamentary committee, Gen. Robertson testified that the battalion of grenadiers led by Col. Stuart, and the Thirty-second regulars, without waiting for orders, crossed the open field north of the Flatbush road with the intention of carrying Fort Putnam by assault. "Gen. Vaughan begged permission to attack the lines, which were semicircular, with parapets lined with spears and lances, but he was ordered back." [1] The grenadiers, and light infantry, were commanded by Col. Monckton and by Gen. Vaughan, who saw the advantage with which fortune had favored the British forces, and told Howe that the rebels were now shut up between them and the sea, and entirely within their power.

To all these appeals Gen. Howe turned a deaf ear, though Vaughan sent word to him that he could carry the lines with trifling loss, and fairly "stormed with rage when ordered to retire." Two or three hundred yards from the entrenchments, the surface of the ground declined abruptly, and offered such complete protection to the British troops as to be styled by Gen. Robertson in his testimony,

[1] *London Chronicle.*

"a hollow way." It afforded not only shelter from the American cannon, but an opportunity for some of the British letter-writers to affirm that the American cannon were not well mounted, as the shot, fired far above their heads, were only effective in cutting away the limbs of the forest trees high in the air.

We have seen how slight were the defenses before which seventeen thousand men, with forty pieces of artillery, were thus pausing; and it is a subject of curious interest to us, at this day, to observe the estimate of their strength by other British officers. From the minutes of the examination of the officers in command on that day, before the committee of Parliament, we learn almost every thought which animated or depressed them.

The lines, they testify, could not be carried by assault, they could only be taken by regular approaches. "We had no fascines to fill the ditches, or axes to cut away the abatis, or scaling ladders to assault so respectable a work. The lines were a mile and a half in extent, including angles, with a chain of five cannon-proof redoubts, or rather fortressess with ditches, as also had the lines which formed the intervals; the whole surmounted by a most formidable abatis, finished in every part. A corporal and six men had some difficulty in getting through the abatis."[1] The subsequent knowledge of the strength of these works did not, however, confirm this extravagant notion of their impregnability, and honest Gen. Robertson speaks of them with some scorn in his testimony.

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[1] View of the evidence relating to the conduct of the American war. Document 43.

Such as they were, the British were as hasty in their efforts, after the evacuation, to destroy the entrenchments, which gave such mortifying evidence of their own timidity, as they had been tardy in assaulting them. To accomplish their destruction in the shortest time possible, the inhabitants of Kings county were compelled to labor side by side with the British soldiers, in filling the ditches, leveling the breast-works and redoubts, and effacing all traces of the works which they had so short a time previously aided in constructing. So effectually was their evidence of Gen. Howe's caution obliterated, that Gen. Robertson says, 'though he often rode over the ground, in a short time no vestige of the lines could be traced.'

It was at this period that the oversight or neglect of the engineer who had directed the construction of the defenses, nearly proved fatal to the remnant of the American army, protected by them. Anticipating the possible forcing of the lines along Gowanus creek, an interior line of defense had been planned, of which Fort Stirling and the redoubt crowning Ponkiesberg were part. The Fort, standing upon the Heights, commanded the approaches from the River to Red Hook lane, and the guns of the redoubt on Ponkiesberg overlooked the ground intervening between it and Fort Greene.[1] Not until the thunder of the British guns had broken the slumbers of the American army on the morning of the twenty-seventh, did its officers seem to

[1] Fort Stirling was the strongest work of the Brooklyn defenses. It stood on the land of Mr. Hicks; since, the estate of the Pierrepont family. At nine o'clock on the morning of August 30th, as the last boats of the retreating army were crossing the River, the advance guard of the British army occupied this fort, unspiked the guns, and commenced firing on the retreating boats.

have been as fully aware of the existence of a gap in their line of defense between Fort Greene and Freeke's pond, as was their vigilant and well informed enemy.

Several hundred feet of the lines at this point were unfinished, and it was only at daylight on the morning of the battle that the labor of closing them was commenced. One of the participants in this hurried and anxious task has left us his narrative of the incidents occurring at this portion of the lines. The narrator says,[1] that the position occupied by his regiment was near the Yellow Mills, and that on the morning of the battle the regiment was employed in cutting down an orchard of apple-trees, to form a line of *abatis* in front of the breast-work which was even then being constructed across the gap. Fortunately for the safety of this portion of the lines, the thrift of the proprietor of the farm had reared an orchard of large trees, then loaded with their ripening fruit. The inexorable necessities of war demanded their sacrifice; and the pioneer's axe soon leveled them, to be dragged by squads of soldiers into line along the declivity, to defend a point so strangely neglected until this critical hour. The mill-ponds and the creek completed the extension of the lines to the bay, their hitherto impassable mud being considered sufficiently formidable without artificial aid.

Every incident which determines the position or exhibits the conduct of Washington on this day, is full of interest to us. It has been asserted that the General remained on horseback, during the whole day; but he was seen by this narrator walking along the lines, while giving his orders

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[1] Mr. Hezekiah Munsell. Document 48.

to the Colonel of each regiment in person. To Lieut. Col. Hart, he was heard to say: "If the enemy come to attack you, let them approach within twenty yards before you fire." This order was given in anticipation of a stratagem of the enemy to draw the fire of the raw recruits when at such a distance as to render it ineffective, and then with a rapid charge drive them from the breastworks. But, as the honest soldier quaintly observes: "Washington was too old for them." At this point, also, he heard Washington address the troops in these stirring words: "The time has come when Americans must be freemen or slaves. Quit yourselves like men, like soldiers; for all that is worth living for is at stake. I have two pistols loaded, and if I see any man turn his back to-day, I will myself shoot him down. But I will not ask any man to go further than I do. I will fight with you as long as I have a leg or an arm." By words like these, addressed to the soldiers along the line of entrenchments, Washington sought to inspirit these young troops with the determination to make a firm resistance.

That the information of Gen. Robertson regarding the weak points of the American defenses, was minutely accurate, is confirmed by several circumstances. Spies had visited the camp, and returned with their information, unmolested, and almost without concealment; so uncertain was the discipline of the army, and so wide spread the disaffection of the inhabitants to the American cause. Deserters from the Island militia, as well as loyal inhabitants residing within the lines, had found but little difficulty in communicating with the British, and conveyed to them the minutest details of the position and

character of the defenses; the accuracy of which was attested by the movements of the enemy, soon after the arrival of Gen. Robertson's brigade before the American lines.

The completion of the unfinished defenses, during the night and early morning, had been performed too rapidly for information of that important change to reach the enemy. Relying upon the correctness of the reports of his spies, a strong body of Gen. Robertson's troops was therefore pushed forward, soon after the attack on Sullivan's position, with the design of forcing a passage through the break. It is probable that, confident of easily turning the right flank of the Americans through this gap, the enemy pressed forward with some precipitation until they were close upon the new breast-works, when they were received with a heavy fire. Surprised by resistance from a quarter deemed unguarded, the assaulting column retired in some confusion. During the day considerable bodies of this brigade were repeatedly formed, and pushed forward, apparently to assault the entrenchments at this point; but on recovering the bodies of the dead and wounded who had fallen in the first attack, they retired. Although it was fully believed at the time that these subsequent advances, by detached columns of moderate strength, were only intended for the recovery of those who fell in the first attack, yet it is more than probable that they were designed as a part of the general plan of battle. In accordance with this, Gen. Robertson, by his manœuvres, was to keep alive the apprehension of a general assault, and thus prevent the detaching of reinforcements to Gen. Sullivan or Lord Stirling.

There were, indeed, moments during the day, when a column of five or six thousand men, under a vigorous and bold commander, might have fatally struck Sir Henry Clinton's line while in the ardor of pursuit, and while broken by the woods and uneven ground. This manœuvre, by severing his communication with Robertson, would have exposed the latter to an assault from the entrenched lines, and compelled his surrender, or at least his withdrawal under a heavy fire from front and rear.

Another figure appears upon the scene, in striking contrast with the courtly and manly person of Washington. Sometimes dashing along on horseback at full speed, his uniform consisting of a soiled shirt, over which he wore only a sleeveless waistcoat, with a common hanger slung across his broad shoulders by a leathern belt, this person exhibited a tireless energy in riding rapidly along the lines, without apparently any well defined purpose. Again he would be discerned striding back, with bustling haste, on foot, issuing his orders right and left, with a mixture of pompous dignity and vulgar familiarity. This was the brave Gen. Putnam, whose honors had been thrust upon him, more from the generosity of his countrymen, than from true regard to his deserts. To him, unfortunately, had been confided the important command of the forces on the Island; and had success depended solely on his personal bravery, probably the misfortunes of this day would have been avoided. During the performance of one of those evolutions by which Gen. Robertson threatened the American lines, an incident occurred, so eminently characteristic of Gen. Putnam, that it will bear narration.

Among the Kings county militia, stationed behind the entrenchments, and at this time awaiting the assault momentarily threatened, was a native of Brooklyn, named Remsen. It was from his lips that the narrative of the incident was received.[1] At the point where Mr. Remsen was stationed, the embankment was so low that the men were obliged to crouch behind it, to obtain protection from the British fire; and, whenever the enemy approached within range, the first line of troops kneeled, to aim and discharge their guns. A few paces in the rear of the firing parties, Gen. Putnam was constantly stalking back and forth, at every return enforcing anew his favorite command, which Bunker Hill had made so famous: "Don't fire, boys, until you can see the whites of their eyes." The eminent success of this injunction in that battle had given it an importance in the mind of the old Indian fighter which quite justified its frequent repetition behind the Brooklyn entrenchments.

It was the reputation — somewhat damaged by later critical researches — of having stood at bay behind defenses as feeble as these, and there breasted the fierce rush of assaulting columns, that had gained from Washington the reluctant appointment of Gen. Putnam to this command. For patient endurance of the inconveniences of a siege, and for stubborn resistance to the fierceness of an enemy's assault, his experience in Indian warfare had fitted him. But modern researches have clouded his other pretensions, and placed upon the brow of Col. Prescott the laurels, of which the fulsome laudations of Putnam, by his per-

[1] Statement to Mr. J. Carson Brevoort, by Mr. Remsen.

sonal favorites, had robbed their owner. Of the hollowness of this part of his reputation, his soldiers, however, at this time, suspected nothing.

Had the British general been content with pushing his forces headlong on the American entrenchments, without employing the refined devices of Italian military strategy in outflanking, it is possible that Gen. Putnam would have shone on this day as a brave, and perhaps a successful general. But, as it was, his exertions seem to have been confined to walking backward and forward behind the crouching lines of his men, and impressively repeating his famous military order.

Near that part of the line where Mr. Remsen lay, was a group that attracted his attention, because he felt certain that its manœuvres would cause an explosion of Putnam's wrath, the moment it caught his eye. A soldier of one of the Connecticut regiments was crouching behind the breastwork, and was busily employed in loading his own and his comrade's gun, which were fired, however, only by the latter, a Maryland soldier, who was kneeling to rest his piece upon the parapet, and with deliberate aim picking off the enemy's troops. This partnership of courage and poltroonery, which exposed the brave Marylander without intermission, while his comrade was reclining in perfect safety, at length arrested the attention of the promenading General. The angry blood, which fired so readily at the call of his hot temper, flamed in an instant on his countenance; and with a few quick strides he reached the side of the couchant hero, who remained unconscious of the proximity of his angry General. The flat side of his sword fell with stinging force on the back

of the culprit as he exclaimed, "*Get up, up you d—d coward, and fire your own gun.*"

At one time a number of British officers approached so close to the lines, for the purpose of reconnoitering them, that, while engaged in their observations, they came within musket range. This group of officers was fired at by William Van Cott, of Bushwick, after a deliberate aim. The instant fall of one of their number announced that his shot had taken effect, and the survivors, on recovering the body, immediately withdrew. Perceiving the effect of his shot, either from remorse at having deliberately slain a fellow being, or perhaps because the act had committed him beyond the hope of pardon, Van Cott threw down his musket, and said that "he had done his part."[1]

Thus with menaces of attack along the whole line, which terminated only in feeble skirmishes, the long, disastrous twenty-seventh of August was drawing to its end. Night was gathering over the most hopeless enterprise ever undertaken in the cause of human liberty. On every side prevailed a sullen despair, which filled the timid with dismay, but armed the brave with sterner resolution. All looked forward to the morrow, with gloomy forebodings.

Washington had witnessed, as we have seen, the total rout of Stirling's division, and the slaughter of the Maryland battalion, and had at once hastened across the River to expedite the passage of reinforcements. The necessity for these was believed to be exceedingly urgent, as nothing was more certain than that the enemy had landed the great mass of his forces on Long Island.

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[1] It was during this afternoon that Capt. Rutgers' brother, Col. Rutgers, of New York, was killed; but at what part of the lines is unknown.

The events of the morning had dispelled those illusions which had blinded his Council, and, to the mind of Washington, had rendered it certain that the whole British army was before him, and that, until it had forced the Brooklyn lines, the attack upon New York was suspended. Relieved from apprehension of imminent danger to that city, his clear judgment at once decided upon the important movement which the enemy's position left open to him.

Orders were at once communicated to the camps, from the Grand Battery to King's Bridge, for certain regiments to march. Every moment was big with opportunity. Enough troops must be withdrawn from New York to hold the Brooklyn lines, or the horrors of the morning would sink into insignificance, compared with the disasters which must be apprehended.

Throughout the morning detached squads of troops had crossed the river, warned, by the heavy firing, that their countrymen were sorely pressed. Officers sought their commands, already hotly engaged, and privates were hurrying under urgent orders to their companies. A Connecticut regiment had crossed some time in the morning, and, being ordered to reinforce Stirling on the right, had reached, as we have seen, the west bank of Gowanus creek in time to send a few volleys into the enemy's columns, and to aid the last of the survivors of Stirling's corps in struggling across its slime. The conduct of its officers, if we may trust the account of one of its own members, was poorly calculated to inspire the soldiers with that high courage which the exigencies of the battle-field demanded. The raw recruits, of which the regiment was composed, were already sufficiently impressed with the

dangers of their situation. The unaccustomed sight of wounded men borne past them, with all the ghastly effects of battle apparent on their forms and depicted in their features, produced an appalling effect upon these young soldiers, which the conduct of their officers did not tend to remove. From one of the various causes which robbed many of the American regiments of their officers before the battle, the colonel of this regiment was absent from his place at the head of his men, and the lieutenant-colonel was in command. The regiment was marching along Red Hook lane, within half a mile of Gowanus creek, when it was halted for refreshment. Within sight of their comrades' terrible need, while the sanguinary conflict was raging in almost full view across the creek, these men found stomach to complain of their scanty fare. During the half hour consumed in their festive operations, while hundreds of their countrymen were perishing before them, whom a few volleys might have relieved from pursuit, some of the strangest incidents occurred which a battle-field ever witnessed.

The limited resources of the new Government had compelled the adoption of an economical designation of ranks. For this purpose the cockades of the field officers were red, those of captains were white, while the inferior officers were distinguished by wearing those of green. The lieutenant-colonel and the major were now observed busily employed in removing these insignia of their rank from their hats. The nervous curiosity of the soldiers, already alarmed, and keenly sensitive to all that betokened their approach to danger, made them eagerly demand the cause of this singular self-degradation. To this, the lieutenant

colonel, whom the good natured soldier narrating these incidents declares to have been a fine officer and a brave soldier, most naively replied that "he was willing to risk his life in the cause of his country, but was unwilling to stand as a mark for the enemy to fire at."

Another officer of this regiment, a gallant lieutenant, inspired by remorse, or perhaps rendered maudlin by potations with which he had hoped to imbibe courage, was running from one to another of his company, beseeching all to forgive his offenses, and declaring with lugubrious solemnity that he most generously forgave them any wrong they might have designed him. At that particular moment he could not recollect any special injury which he had suffered from their malice; but he was disposed to be generous, and to make a clean breast of it.

A private soldier, in the trepidation which the conduct of his officers had fostered if not inspired, had, unnoticed by them, marched nearly half a mile from the resting place unaware of the loss of his own musket. On being accosted by one of his comrades with the inquiry how he had disposed of it, he anxiously clapped one hand to his side, to assure himself that the musket was in his possession; but finding it gone, he set out on his return to camp to reclaim it. Luckily a cooler comrade had brought it on, designing to ascertain how long the mental abstraction caused by fear would keep him insensible to the loss of his only means for self-protection.

It was this regiment of men, rendered callous to every soldierly appeal by the brutal selfishness of fear, which passed, as we have seen, with such unconcern, the little party of artillerists who were painfully dragging their

heavy gun through the deep sand of Red Hook lane. The zeal and self-devotion of those brave fellows enabled them to inflict a noble punishment upon their faint-hearted friends, almost equal in severity to that which they bestowed upon the enemy. In advancing to its position on the west bank of the creek, the regiment was exposed to a galling fire, and was only relieved from its danger by the active service of the very gun which it had so stolidly refused to aid in bringing into action. Whether the officers found time to restore the cockades to their hats, and to repent of their poltroonery, we do not know; but the only considerable service we hear of, as performed by them, was the assistance given by their men in dragging out upon firm ground such of Stirling's soldiers as escaped massacre and drowning. "These fugitives," says the narrator, "came out of the water to us, looking like drowned rats, and were truly a pitiful sight. Many of them were killed in the pond, and more were drowned; and when the tide fell we found a number of corpses, and a great many arms, sunk in the pond and creek."

Camping here for the night, however, we shall hear again of this regiment as engaged in an exploit which required a temerity that appears incredible. The feeble courage of the officers will hardly surprise us, when we become acquainted with the means by which such rank was obtained, in those early days of our commonwealth of which we are accustomed to think as a golden age of official purity and patriotism. In the town, county, and state Committees of Safety, was vested at this time almost the entire power of the Government; and boastful pretense, personal prejudice, and unblushing nepotism, had

lost none of their wonted sway in organizations which were themselves the creations of a town caucus.[1]

The Connecticut militia had acquired some notoriety in the previous campaign, from the provincialism of their manners, the old-world fashion of their equipments and uniforms, and their scorn of military discipline. The slight esteem into which they had fallen, on these accounts, had become still less in consequence of the frequent panics which added to their disorder and insubordination; and the not infrequent desertion of entire picket guards and companies had brought them very low in favor with the Commander-in-chief. An incident which occurred a few days subsequently, at Kip's Bay, on occasion of the landing of a small party of the enemy, will illustrate the character of these troops. Two Connecticut regiments, commanded by Gen. Parsons, fled in dismay before fifty or sixty of the enemy, without firing a shot, leaving their own General, and Washington, with only about fifty men to resist the attack. All attempts to rally them utterly failed. As well might sheep have been induced to make head against the wolves, so ungovernable was their panic. Under the disheartening revelations which this incident afforded, of the unfitness of the material with which he had undertaken the mighty task of securing American liberties, the firmness of Washington gave way; and flinging his hat upon the ground, in a transport of indignation and despair, he exclaimed, "Are these the men with whom I am to defend America?"[2] At the moment, Gen. Greene says, he sought death rather than life; and, bare-

[1] See *Graydon's Memoirs of a Life chiefly spent in Pennsylvania.*

[2] *Read,* p. 236, vol. 1; *Graydon,* p. 174.

headed and alone, Washington would have remained to meet his fate at the hands of the advancing enemy, had not his bridle been seized by an aid-de-camp, who preserved the life of the Commander-in-chief in spite of the despair which made him for the time indifferent to it.

Another incident occurred in New York, during the fortnight subsequent to the battle, which exhibits in a still stronger light the difficulties with which Washington had to struggle, and the feeble patriotism of some of his troops. Gov. Trumbull of Connecticut, fully alive to the momentous necessities of the times, had tendered to the General the services of five or six hundred mounted farmers, who presented themselves in New York, soon after the battle of Long Island, under the command of Col. Thomas Seymour. On being informed by Washington that the period of their enlistment was too short to effect a discipline which would make them useful as cavalry, Col. Seymour, with all the appearance of a generous glow of self-devotion, offered the services of his troops as infantry. A few days of camp duty and hard fare, however, developed in the colonel a lawyer-like acuteness which was more creditable to his shrewdness than to his patriotism. The severity of the service, and the dangers which were thickening around the hard-pressed American army, made him regret his rash fervor; and, at the end of three or four days, he informed Washington that he had discovered that it was contrary to the laws of Connecticut for her cavalry to serve as infantry, and therefore he demanded the dismissal of himself and troops.[1] Washington replied

[1] *Irving's Life of Washington*, vol. II, p. 285.

contemptuously, that "as his men considered themselves exempt from the common duty of soldiers, would not mount guard, do garrison duty, or perform service separate from their horses, on an island where horse-troops could not be brought into action, he did not care how soon they were dismissed."[1]

One of these valiant cavalrymen had been in some capacity on Long Island during the action of the twenty-seventh, and the unlucky trooper had the misfortune to be captured. The British officers, before whom he was brought, were more disposed to merriment than to cruelty, at that moment, and seemed greatly entertained with his odd military costume, and his *naïve* address. On being asked what was his particular line of duty in the American army, he replied that it was "to flank a little, and carry tidings."[2]

But, happily for the destinies of the country, these were not the only troops which Washington was enabled to bring across the River, for the reinforcement of his lines. Fearing an assault on the extreme left, he had early in the day ordered the passage of the two Pennsylvania battalions, commanded by Cols. Shee and Magaw, then stationed at King's Bridge, on the Harlem river. It was late in the afternoon when they arrived at the Brooklyn ferry; and, as all sounds of the conflict had ceased, they were quartered near, for the purpose of crossing at early dawn. The panic and confusion which prevailed in New York on that night were frightful. The news of the defeat and capture of the army, and the approach of a sanguinary

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[1] *Graydon.*

[2] *Graydon's Memoirs.*

enemy, tortured the minds of citizens and of soldiers; and, to the natural apprehension excited by them, was added the great difficulty with which food was procured, for either officers or men. At the Grand Battery, it is true, barrels of crackers and gunpowder, and boxes of bullets and hard bread, stood open for such as had the good fortune to espy, and the providence to secure them; but there were many who obtained neither.

Night had now closed in upon the scene of defeat and slaughter; and for seven years after none but an enemy's or a captive's eye, unless perhaps the furtive glance of secret friends, rested upon that gory battle-field. Long before that period had expired, the mournful evidences of massacre and inhumanity had been hidden in the woods and thickets upon the Brooklyn hills, or were sunk in the deep slime of the Gowanus creek and meadows. Within the Brooklyn lines was now presented a scene of wild disorder and confusion, that was not without a dramatic and ludicrous by-play mingling with its tragic interest. The utmost astonishment and consternation had seized the minds of officers and men, at the manner in which their defeat had been effected. "For," as it was said by Reed, "had Sir Henry Clinton fallen from the clouds, his presence would not have been more unexpected," than when he fell upon their rear. The troops who had arrived from New York, subsequent to the combat, were eager to learn the particulars of a battle, only vague rumors of which had reached them. To gratify the cravings of curiosity, and to allay the pangs of hunger, were alike objects of attention; and groups of soldiers who had survived the carnage, and whom the darkness now permitted to enter the lines,

were eagerly importuned to narrate what they had seen and had suffered.

During the night the number of those fortunate fugitives who were enabled to effect their escape, and to reach the lines, was very considerable; for the investiture of the entrenched village of Brooklyn, although close, was, from the nature of the ground, not without gaps on the salt meadows and bogs. The dense woods and thickets which then covered more than three-fourths of the site of the present city, greatly favored the attempt to pass the enemy's pickets and scouts. The great swamp which then extended its tangled maze, along the present line of Grand and Flushing avenues, from Wallabout bay to Newtown creek, was too dense to allow pursuit of the fugitives, while its devious paths, familiar to many of them, led over morasses too treacherous and threatening for a stranger's foot.[1]

Gen. Parsons, a brave Connecticut officer, who commanded on the extreme left during the morning of the twenty-seventh, was surrounded by the enemy in a swamp, where is now the basin marked for a lake in Prospect Park; but, eluding his pursuers until night set in, he was fortunate enough to succeed in reaching the entrenchments.[2] A body of American troops made so vigorous a push upon the enemy's lines near Bedford, that eighty of their number broke their way through, after close, hard fighting, and

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[1] This dense mass of foliage, covering some hundreds of acres of bog and lowland, remained through the Revolution; and its secret paths afforded passage to many an exile furtively revisiting his home, and many an agent of the provincial Congress.

[2] Gen. Parsons was said by Lieut. Col. Grant to have been the person who wounded him.

escaped. Taking the Newtown and Astoria road, they crossed the river at Hellgate, and came in during the next day.

The alarmed inhabitants of the neighboring towns, who had abandoned their homes on the landing of the invaders, and had fled to the Brooklyn lines, added another element of confusion to the masses which thronged the little entrenched peninsula. Twelve or fifteen hundred horned cattle, gathered from the farms of Flatbush and the adjacent towns by military order, for the purpose of depriving the enemy of their use as supplies — which, notwithstanding, fell into his hands on the evacuation of Brooklyn — were now roaming about the trampled camps, which afforded them no sustenance, and lowing for the rich pastures from which they had been driven. Early in the evening a heavy thunder shower had fallen upon the unprotected troops, and added greatly to the general discomfort; but now that it had ceased, the camp fires threw their ruddy glow upon the groups which were collected amid the strange scenes of this bivouac of a defeated army. The quaint, Dutch structures, so familiar to us, which straggled here and there along the narrow country roads, clustered thicker around the little octagonal Church which stood in the middle of the Jamaica road, near the crossing of the present Fulton avenue and Bridge street. These were occupied by the officers; while the half uniformed, and scarcely more than half-clothed, soldiers of the republic were stretched wearily upon the wet ground, or grouped around the camp fires, broiling their salt pork on the coals, or perhaps employed in dividing one of the slaughtered cattle. Here the exiled families of the neigh-

boring farmers clustered around the farm-wagons which had brought them and their household gear to these unwonted scenes, where they sat, startled by the present, and appalled at the prospects of the future. On the verge, where the glow and the shadow met, might be seen herds of the captured cattle, for a moment standing with their great horns and eager eyes thrust forward into the light, and anon, frightened by some of these unfamiliar sights and sounds, sweeping away, as with the rush of a troop of cavalry, into the darkness.

When, to these weird scenes, is added the gloom which that night had fallen upon our country's hopes, the apprehension of the sudden night-assault, or of the onset of the victorious foe upon the morrow, the maddening thought that scarcely a mile away, upon the hills, lay two thousand of their countrymen, tortured with stiffening wounds or silent in death — we can easily picture to ourselves the horrors which then clustered around the spot upon which now stand the edifices of a great and prosperous city.

Even up to the night of the twenty-seventh of August, the general officers of the American army clung to the unhappy delusion that it was still possible to defend New York; and, as its possession could not be maintained without the occupation of Brooklyn, Washington indulged their hopes, or perhaps submitted to that overruling of his judgment, which the undetermined powers of his command at the time compelled. This decision was attended with less danger, as the movements of the enemy's fleet and army had convinced the Commander-in-chief, at eight o'clock, that no immediate assault was intended. To

decide for the enemy, almost in advance of the consciousness by him of his own intentions, is the peculiar power of a great General; and on this occasion Washington justified that appellation, by acting upon his anticipation of the enemy's movements as confidently as if he had been present at their council. To his calm judgment it was clear that Lord Howe would never risk the safety of his fleet in passing the heavy shore-batteries; nor would the General, his brother, with the carnage of Charlestown heights still present in his memory, shatter his splendid army by hurling it on a paltry breastwork, which could be so certainly and safely taken by regular approaches. Everything combined to convince Washington that the blow was suspended, and would not immediately fall. At night the fleet was still at anchor, without exhibiting any tokens of a movement, the possibility of which was indeed precluded by the unvarying direction of the wind. All the wide semicircle of hills glowed with the campfires of the enemy's land forces, and all signs of preparation for an assault had ceased. After the most careful preparations to resist a night attack, Washington at length submitted the fate of his army to the issue of a battle in which it should stand behind its entrenchments, and so awaited the fortunes of the morrow.

Among the incidents of this night, one which tradition has preserved is worthy of narration, although history has not deigned to record it, as it is associated with the brave defense of an isolated position. On the narrow lane which skirted the shore of Gowanus bay, near where Third avenue is intersected by Twenty-third street, yet stands the house of Wynant Bennet, its walls scarred and

indented by the grape-shot fired during this night from British or Hessian guns. From the lips of the then proprietor, the story of its occupation and defense, narrated to members of his family still living, is derived. Mr. Bennet, and some of his whig neighbors, had participated in the sanguinary conflict which raged around his dwelling; and, from his knowledge of the peculiar advantages of the vicinity for defense, may have suggested its occupation by a portion of Stirling's troops.

Although we cannot learn without regret that the names of those brave Long Island farmers, who fought for home and country in the battle which raged along their pleasant farms, have not come down to us, we are still glad to find undoubted evidence that some of them were faithful, where treason was safety.

The position of Wynant Bennet's house, in conjunction with the adjacent knoll and creek, gave it the character of a formidable redoubt; as the sand-banks and thickets could not be battered down by cannon shot, and the house was below the range of the batteries. It stood about fifty yards from the bay, in one of those sheltered nooks at the foot of the hills, in which our Dutch farmers loved so well to nestle their dwellings. Half that distance from its door, toward the south, the tide flowed through a narrow creek, to a bog, which extended in a south-easterly direction for a hundred yards beyond the house. On a slight bridge, the road to the Narrows crossed this little bayou, and wound in a sharp curve over a sand-hill or bluff, called Bluckie's Barracks. Hidden between the sides of a deep cut in the hill, the road, winding along its eastern face, was completely obscured from the view of

the enemy advancing from the south, and enabled the American riflemen, under Col. Atlee, to occupy it with great annoyance to the British, and almost perfect security to themselves. Added to these favorable features for a defensive position, the bluff jutted out so far into the bay as to be well protected by its waters, and was covered with a tangled forest, which aided in the concealment and protection of its defenders. The crushing of Stirling's left and centre on the hills, left this point so far to the left of Gen. Grant's force, that it was doubtless considered by its officers unnecessary to risk the loss of such numbers of their men as must have fallen in assaulting the position, which was scarcely less formidable in its defenses, than insignificant by its isolation. By adopting a different policy the Americans lost the battle of Germantown, in checking their pursuit of a flying foe, to make a useless assault on Chew's house, under a murderous fire from the squad of infantry, who, in their flight, had found protection within its walls.

During the conflict between Stirling and Grant in the morning, the sharp fire of Atlee's and Kichline's riflemen, stationed here, had more than once turned back the advancing enemy.[1] As the dense files of the detachments from Grant's division moved up the narrow winding road, the sharp crack of the American rifles would burst

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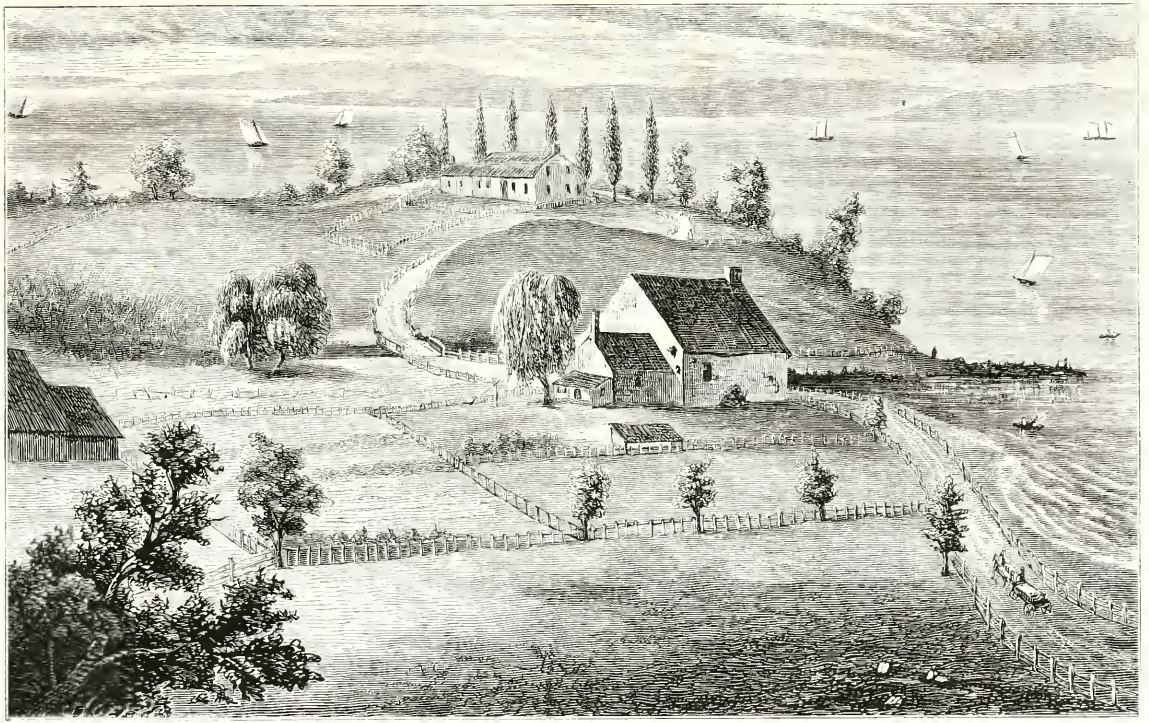
[1] Mr. Garret Bergen, an aged resident of Gowanus, who died a few years since, was accustomed to narrate an incident that occurred during the battle, of which he was a witness. The fire of the American riflemen had become so deadly, that a British sub-officer rushed into the farm-house in a panic of fear, declaring that he would not remain on the field exposed to certain death, from a hidden foe who picked off all the officers.— Statement by the late John G. Bergen.



VIEW OF BLUCKIES BARRACKS.

from the thickets and clumps of trees on the banks above. In a few minutes, these deadly discharges became too fatal for endurance, by men exposed to an enfilading fire without the opportunity for retaliation or defense, and the detachment was withdrawn. Every advance of the British, in this direction, was repulsed; and it is believed that from Kichline's rifles on the hill, and the defenders of Bluckie's Barracks on the right, the enemy suffered the greater part of the loss reported by Grant in his division.

Tradition preserves another incident occurring on this spot. When the dreadful rout began, and the broken ranks of the American army, crushed together in a mob of flying and despairing men, torn by the storm of grape and volleys of musketry, were skirting the borders of Freeke's and Denton's mill-ponds, to seek a crossing place, it is probable that the Islanders engaged in the battle, conscious that escape in that direction was nearly hopeless, turned their flight in the opposite one. All the frightful dangers of that morass and creek, into which so many of their countrymen were blindly plunging, were familiar to them; and they sought shelter in a position whose advantages for a desperate defense were more to be trusted than the terrors of the creek and marsh. Thrust back from every other channel of escape, our sturdy farmers, alarmed for their families, as well as for themselves, instinctively sought the homes which till now had sheltered them. But a few days before, Mr. Bennet and his neighbors had furbished up their fowling pieces, in anticipation of the hour of battle, and now, with all its grim horrors, it was upon them. In these quiet homes, that nestled in the glades and under

the hills, they had been preparing for war without knowing anything of its sad realities. Soon after the news of the landing of the British reached him, Mr. Bennet had cut the lead sinkers from his seines and fikes, and his wife had aided him in moulding them into bullets. Others had sacrificed their pewter spoons, to form the balls they had this day sped on their errands of death. And now they were flying before the enemy they had relied so confidently upon repulsing.

While part of their number were stationed in the thickets on the hill, or lined the borders of the deep cut in the road, others garrisoned the house, and guarded the northern gate of their stronghold, the bridge. So fierce had been the resistance by the riflemen, and so bloody the repulse of the British in their assaults during the forenoon, that night found the Americans still in possession of this isolated outpost. Late in the afternoon a boat with one or two officers had passed Red Hook, and come down to this point, for the purpose of gaining some information of Stirling's division; and it was perhaps owing to their suggestions, and their encouragement to hold out until night, that these dispositions for defense were taken.

While preparations were making for departure, under cover of the darkness, a number of soldiers, with the recklessness of their class, occupied their time in playing a game of cards in a room of Wynant Bennet's house. The rays, streaming through the narrow window, attracted the attention of some British artillerymen upon the hill, and in a short time the card party were startled by the heavy roar of a field-piece at no great distance; but as no

result followed that indicated their group to be the target, the game was continued. The gun was fired again, and again, until the proper range was obtained, when the crash of a shot against the side of the house, close to the window, suddenly terminated the game. Several shots struck the house — marks of whose passage are still visible — the light, which the party left burning in the haste of their departure, indicating its position so well as to render the aim of the gunners tolerably accurate.

In the meantime, all the boats of the neighboring creek and shore, whose usual place of mooring was familiar to the inhabitants, had been collected; and, at a short time after midnight, all the occupants of Bluckie's barracks had been embarked and rowed over the River to New York. Bennet's house was abandoned by the family, who accompanied the retreating troops, from apprehension that the repulse which the enemy had suffered in its neighborhood, might have so exasperated them, that little distinction would be made by them between soldiers and non-combatants.[1]

In the camp within the Brooklyn lines, the night wore slowly away to the weary and anxious soldier, who there found security, but not repose. The usual camp-alarms, which spread anxious thrills through a body of broken and dispirited men, in the presence of a powerful and

[1] It will thus be seen that the battle of the twenty-seventh of August was a series of unconnected skirmishes, in which detachments of the American army, cut off from the main body, fought here and there amid the dense woods, or narrow passes, as accident or skill afforded them an opportunity for successful resistance. Few of these stands, however, have left the evidence of the struggles around them, so plainly as the humble farm-house of Wynant Bennet.

victorious enemy, were not infrequent during the long night; but when the dawn arose upon the dull, leaden sky, the sounds of conflict, or of angry watchfulness, grew more frequent. Here and there along the lines, the discharges of musketry, or the sharp ring of a rifle, gave token of the proximity of the enemy. But as the morning light increased, other sounds evinced his energy and determination; for the dull thuds of the pick announced that the enemy was himself entrenching. At the distance of six hundred yards from Fort Putnam, on the high ground near the present junction of De Kalb and Clinton avenues, just out of rifle range, the breast-works of a redoubt began to appear. Gen. Howe had prudently declined the tempting opportunity which the ardor of his men presented him, of assaulting the feeble entrenchments so thinly manned by the dispirited troops he had lately defeated; and he was now securely making his advances by a regular siege. How little effective resistance could have been made, we at this day probably know much better than did either of the contending parties.

The American guards slept at their posts, although frequently aroused by their officers, and threatened with instant death on the repetition of the offence. So great were the weariness and stupor which fell on these worn survivors of the battle, that, although the rain fell in torrents during the evening, until the camp was flooded with water, they slept upon the soaked earth, and in the pools of water, unconscious of the peals of thunder and the vivid lightning. The decision of Gen. Howe, now so apparent, while it relieved the Americans from the immediate apprehensions of an assault, only delayed the approach of

a danger but little less threatening. In a few hours the cannon shot and shell, from the redoubt now being constructed, would be crashing through the lines, from a distance which made its position unassailable.

In the meanwhile, Washington was hurrying to the defense of his lines every soldier who could be withdrawn from New York. The remnant of Smallwood's battalion, and the Pennsylvania battalions of Cols. Shee and Magaw, were joined by Glover's Marblehead regiment, and soon after daylight, on the morning of the twenty-eighth, were hurried across the river, and marched to the extreme left of the entrenched lines, on the ground between Wallabout bay and Fort Putnam. On this low marshy land, saturated with the heavy rains of the previous night, these regiments were encamped, where the discomfort and unwholesomeness of their position were increased by the drizzling rain which fell throughout the day. Nothing could better evince the depression which pervaded the troops that occupied the lines of the Brooklyn entrenchments, than the expressions of joy with which they received these reinforcements. To most of them it must have appeared like a reprieve from death, as they fully comprehended the weakness of their position, and the certain results of an assault upon it. There was little, however, in the condition of the arriving troops to induce self-gratulation; for the fatal camp dysentery, and malarious fevers, had thinned their ranks as effectually as a bloody battle, and the remembrance of the hundreds of their comrades left behind them, lying in their camp hospitals, or resting in a soldier's grave, had lessened their confidence and efficiency.

The combined forces of the regiments gathered at this point, amounted to thirteen hundred men; and though greatly reduced from their original numbers, still, by dint of hard drilling, by officers who were emulous to excel in discipline, they presented a soldierly appearance, strongly in contrast with the mob of disorderly and insubordinate men which filled the ranks of other regiments. Washington himself attests their superiority, in one of his letters, by saying: "They had been trained with more than ordinary attention." The ground which they occupied was not only low and marshy, but gave very unfavorable promise of successful defense. From the head of a small creek emptying into Wallabout bay, near the present Raymond and Tillary streets, the line of defense extended along the slightly ascending ground, to the vicinity of Park avenue, and was not only entirely overlooked by the hills occupied by the British, but would be completely covered by the range of the batteries they were mounting in the redoubt. As the nature of the low ground in their front forbade the construction of breast-works, it was defended, as we have seen, by a wide ditch, the embankment formed by the earth thrown from it being surmounted by a fraise of sharp-pointed stakes, firmly planted on its top.

If sleep were possible on the sodden earth, the pangs of hunger, to which the defenders of this part of the line were now a prey, would have driven it away. Abundant supplies had been distributed; but the rain had saturated the bread in their haversacks, and extinguished the fires kindled for cooking their salt pork. Without tents, or shelter of any kind, it was remembered for many years afterward by Capt. Graydon, of Shee's regiment, with

what gratification he partook of a slice of fat barbecued pig, procured by one of his men at the risk of his life. Close to the entrenchments, stood a farm house, from whose dangerous proximity to both contending forces the inhabitants had fled; and their deserted home and farm-yard furnished to the famished soldiers both the welcome food, and the fire for its cooking. Even the exposure of their position to the hottest of the enemy's fire, had not sufficient terror to overcome the fierce demands of hunger.

At last the slow hours of that twenty-eighth of August wore away. Even the drizzling rain, the pangs of hunger, and the dreary wretchedness of the muddy bivouac, were at times unfelt, when tokens of an immediate general assault upon the entrenchments became more threatening. Along nearly the whole extent of the lines, a skirmishing fire was maintained during the day, which increased at times at different points to such a degree, and was returned by such heavy volleys from the enemy, that regiments were formed, and preparations made, for repelling an attack by the enemy's whole line. Indeed, so constant were the discharges from the American entrenchments, and so frequent the heavy crash of concentrating firing, that from Wallabout bay, across the entire neck of the peninsula, and along the mill-ponds and creek to Gowanus bay, there seemed to be a line of battle heavily engaged.

This skirmishing engagement was encouraged by the officers, in accordance with Washington's orders, as it served in some degree to inspire confidence in his beaten and dispirited troops, and also warned the enemy of the maintenance of our lines by a heavy force. Washington still retained his intention of risking the great battle which

he deemed inevitable, behind the Brooklyn entrenchments; for all his movements indicate that, up to this time, the idea of a retreat from Long Island had not been entertained. In fact, the almost blind confidence of the General in his insubordinate, ill-disciplined, and poorly armed forces is quite inexplicable; for he manœuvred them in positions which would have tried the nerves of veteran soldiers, and raw recruits were thrust forward into battle with the most thoroughly disciplined army of Europe.

The constantly recurring showers had caused the suspension of work upon the British redoubt, but the enemy seized the occasion of a heavy thunder-storm to make a demonstration upon the American lines. They doubtless expected to find the Americans unprepared, in consequence of the damage to their ammunition and fire-arms; which would not equally affect the efficiency of the assaulting force, relying solely upon their bayonets. Three strong columns, said by the current accounts to have consisted of their entire force, were thrown forward at different points between Fort Putnam and Fort Box, but were met by such heavy volleys along the whole line, that they were not pushed to the assault, but were recalled as soon as the firm resistance, of the heavy force manning the works, was demonstrated by the attempt. The British officers stormed with rage at the restraint upon their courage, imposed by the excessive caution of their commander, and expressed the utmost scorn of the paltry works before them, and of the contemptible mob of farmers and tradesmen which defended them.

The assault at no point was a surprise. Fortunately, perhaps, their very destitution of shelter made the vicinity

of the breast-works as comfortable for the bivouac of the American troops as any position within the lines; and the men, in compliance with orders, lay upon their firelocks during the storm, to protect them with their bodies. Upon the announcement of the approach of the enemy, the troops sprang at once behind the parapet with their arms and ammunition, thus preserved, in condition to meet and turn back the assaulting columns.

There were evidences of concert between these movements and an expected one by the fleet, which, at the same time, made strenuous exertions to bring its guns to aid the attack; but the elements, which combined for the discomfort of the American troops, seemed to have been also arrayed for the purpose of preventing their destruction. The wind either lulled entirely, or held obstinately in the north-east, and thus baffled every effort of Lord Howe to sail his fleet into the East River, where it had but to appear, and the destiny of America was fixed. On what slight casualties, what unexpected conjunctures of the most insignificant affairs, hung the fate of the army, and of the cause of liberty!

Another long and gloomy night passed wearily away, and the depressing influences of their situation began to wear upon the spirits and endurance of the bravest of the troops. It was evident to all, that their occupation of Brooklyn was limited to the time when the guns from the enemy's fleet and batteries should open fire upon their position. During the night, the British had so far completed their redoubt as to mount their great guns upon it, and to be in readiness for opening their fire on the succeeding day.

A dense fog hung over the Island and River, when the morning of the twenty-ninth dawned. The obscurity which shut from the view every object at the distance of a few yards, delayed the opening of the fire from the British batteries; and it was not until late in the forenoon that the heavy mist lifted sufficiently to permit the observation of objects within the lines. The guns in the redoubt on the Clinton avenue height began at once a vigorous cannonade upon Fort Putnam, which replied, with its five heavy pieces, sending their solid shot into various points within the British lines. With regard to the effect of this fire, American accounts have preserved the same reticence as on most subjects connected with the history of the siege, and have left us nothing to communicate. The British accounts, however, treat the whole affair with great levity, and assert that the American cannon balls flew high over their heads.[1]

The inclemency of the previous night, and the opening of the great siege guns upon the fort and lines near them, had engendered a feeling of extreme despondency in the minds of the officers of the Pennsylvania battalions, which guarded the extreme left of the fortifications. During the morning of the twenty-ninth, Col. Shee, without calling a council of his officers, had obtained in private, from most of them, an expression of opinion regarding the safety of their position. Capt. Graydon's

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[1] "On the twenty-ninth, the British riflemen sheltered themselves behind the houses of Mr. Cowenhoven and Mr. Bergen, near the lines, and to prevent them from using these protections for annoying our troops, the houses were set on fire by the Americans, and consumed." *Gen. Johnson's Manuscript Journal.*

prompt statement that their situation was a very discouraging one, doubtless represented the belief of all; for he was directed by Col. Shee to hasten to the quarters of Col. Joseph Reed, and request him to ride down to that part of the lines — with the design of urging him to propose a retreat without loss of time. Col. Shee at the same time remarked that it was his belief that unless his forces were soon withdrawn from their dangerous position, they would all be cut to pieces. Capt. Graydon did not find the adjutant-general at his quarters, as he had a short time previously ridden down to the battery on Red Hook, in company with General Mifflin, and Col. Grayson of Virginia, one of Washington's aids. The former had been in command of the forces stationed at King's Bridge, and had only the day before arrived in camp. The Red Hook redoubt was situated on a knoll, in the centre of a little peninsula of upland, scarcely more than twenty acres in extent, which rose, at the highest point, no more than twenty feet above the great salt meadow that surrounded it. Its site is believed to be intersected by Van Brunt and Van Dyke streets. Although a work of but little importance, the severe battering it had undergone from the Roebuck, on the morning of the twenty-seventh, impressed the minds of these officers with greater despondency than had all the sad events of which the last few days had been so full. From the condition of this earthwork, torn and rent by the distant guns of a single ship, could be easily foreseen the effect of the broadsides of a powerful fleet, poured at short range upon the American forces along the East River.

A curious phenomenon permitted Col. Reed and his companions to clearly observe that fleet, at anchor near the Narrows. The dense fog, which covered both sea and land with an impenetrable cloud, was rolled away from the bay by a sudden shift of the wind, while it completely shrouded all objects upon the land.[1] Within the Narrows, and close upon the Staten Island shore, lay at anchor a fleet of British transports and men of war, numbering more than four hundred vessels, of all classes. It was apparent that some movement was in contemplation. Boats were passing to and from the admiral's ship; and the three officers could not doubt that on the change of the tide, which was now ebbing, if the wind held in that quarter to which it had just shifted, and the fog continued to clear, all this immense fleet would sweep resistlessly up

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[1] Mr. Bancroft suspends not a little of the weight of his argument against the credibility of Gen. Reed's account of the circumstances which determined the retreat, upon the improbability of the fog lifting so fortunately for his discovery of the British fleet getting under weigh. He apparently gives but little credit to Stedman, an officer serving under Sir Wm. Howe, whose voluminous history of the war is valuable, not only as bearing marks of fidelity to truth, but as being the testimony of an intelligent eye-witness. "On the evening of the twenty-seventh our army encamped in front of the enemy's lines, and on the twenty-eighth broke ground about six hundred yards from one of the redoubts on the (rebels') left. The Americans, finding that it was impossible to maintain their post on Long Island, evacuated their lines on the twenty-ninth, and made good their retreat to New York. *At first the wind and tide were both unfavorable to the Americans;* nor was it thought possible that they could have effected their retreat on the evening of the twenty-ninth, until about eleven o'clock the wind shifting, and the sea becoming more calm, the boats were enabled to pass.

"Another remarkable circumstance was, that on *Long Island hung a thick fog* which prevented the British troops from discovering the operations of the enemy, *while on the side of New York the atmosphere was perfectly clear.* The retreat was effected in thirteen hours, though nine thousand men had to pass over the river, besides field artillery, ammunition, provisions, cattle, horses and carts.

"The circumstances of this retreat were particularly glorious to the Americans." — *Stedman's American War,* vol. I, p. 197.

the East River and complete the circle of the investment of the American army. Twenty-seven thousand armed men on the land, aided by more than four hundred heavy guns, manned by six thousand sailors, would form an impenetrable wall of environment about the few thousand soldiers of the republic, who were now sinking with exhaustion and despair. How soon the feeble batteries of Red Hook, Fort Stirling on the Heights, and the Grand Battery on the lower end of New York Island, would be silenced, the half ruined breast-works and dismantled guns of the redoubt in which they stood plainly showed.

Col. Reed saw that there could be no hesitation, in view of the impending danger, as to what should be done; and, alarmed at its imminence, the three officers determined to return at once to Washington's head-quarters, and urge the instant withdrawal of the American army from Long Island, as its only way of escape from utter destruction. The occupation and defense of the city of New York having been decided upon, Washington had clung with great tenacity to the possession of Brooklyn, as the only means by which it could be effected; so that they felt much hesitation in pressing a proposition distasteful to him. There were many reasons which had forced this decision upon his judgment. The composition of his forces, unfitted by their want of discipline for battle in the open field; the imposing line of entrenchments and redoubts, which they then occupied; the possession of a rich city, with all its conveniences for camp and hospital, containing, as it did, almost the entire munitions of war of the nation — all combined to make the General averse to any proposition for the abandonment of Brooklyn.

Washington believed that battle was inevitable, at some period; that war could seldom be conducted without risking everything on a great one; and that, if his troops did not fight behind their entrenchments, they could never be induced to stand the approach of the enemy elsewhere. For these reasons he had determined to try the fortune of war once more on the soil of Long Island. The intimate personal and official relations then existing between Gen. Washington and Col. Reed enabling the latter to approach the Commander-in-chief with the least embarrassment, it was decided that he should assume the delicate office of endeavoring to change his decision. On his return to head-quarters, the adjutant-general received the urgent message from Col. Shee, which had been borne by Capt. Graydon.

Col. Reed at once repaired to the camp of Col. Shee, on the Wallabout, and there learned what strengthened his conviction, and armed his resolution with new arguments. The condition of affairs at this post was even more disheartening than when the Pennsylvania officers had first decided upon the hopelessness of their situation. It had become more and more evident, at each succeeding hour, that the militia could no longer be relied upon, even to hold their position behind the entrenchments, so great was the despondency produced by the disasters of the twenty-seventh, and by the exposure and fatigue of the subsequent days. It is peculiar to this class of troops, that the strain upon the nerves caused by a constantly dreaded attack, ever threatening, yet ever delayed, is even more demoralizing than actual battle. It was now clear, that in their distressed condition, and their state of despondency, a

vigorous assault would throw them into the most frightful consternation and disorder, from which no exertions could then restore them. These gloomy facts weighed with equal force upon the mind of Col. Shee and of Col. Reed, when, after a brief consultation, they parted. But of their decision both officers and troops were kept in profound ignorance. It is a curious and sad coincidence of fortune, that both these officers, to whose circumspection and promptness the safe retreat of the American army was in great measure owing, should, in a short time, have given reason for a suspicion of their waning patriotism.

Col. Reed was said to have violated the confidence of his General, a few months later, in writing disparagingly of him to the enemies whom faction had raised up against him in the American army; and to have uttered language to Gen. Cadwallader, which, if not treason, appeared to his auditors to be the precursor of it. He was charged with taking the first step towards an accommodation with the enemy, of which nothing, it was said, but the victory at Trenton, and the consequent brightening of the American prospects, prevented the accomplishment.

The other party to this important conference, Col. Shee, was an excellent officer, whose efforts for the health and comfort of his men were not the less constant and untiring because he was rigid in his discipline. He was remarkable for his attention to the official duties of his command, at a time when others showed a shameful laxity and indifference to them. The soldierly appearance and efficiency of his regiment were promoted by severe drilling, while his agreeable manners and gentleness of disposition prevented the loss of the esteem and affection of his soldiers. But all these

admirable qualities availed him little, when his fortitude yielded to the impression of anticipations which saw all the weakness, and nothing of the future glory, of the cause he abandoned. The alarm which he felt at the startling dangers of his situation never afterwards left him; for he soon after obtained a furlough, and never returned to his command. This abandonment of the cause of liberty, in its hour of greatest need, did not, however, disqualify him for the intimate friendship of Col. Reed, throughout the long years of the uncertain struggle which ensued.

Among the numerous narratives of occurrences during the battle and the siege, whose authenticity can only be adjudged from internal evidence, is that of a nameless soldier, who describes an incident not undeserving of our attention.[1]

The Connecticut regiment, whose courage had been so shaken on the afternoon of the twenty-seventh, in marching to Gowanus creek, were now encamped upon the sloping ground between it and the present course of Court street. The active foraging within the lines had thoroughly stripped that territory of food; and, under the pressure of hunger, a number of the soldiers had the temerity to cross the creek, in search of supplies. Beyond the salt meadow which bordered it, a corn-field invited their attention, with visions of roasting ears tempting them to brave the dangers of crossing the open space between. Half way from the creek to the corn-field, rose a number of hay-cocks, which, it was hoped, would afford a slight screen from the enemy's view; but, when gliding

[1] *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier.*— Hallowell, 1820.

about behind them, they were fired upon by a number of British troops, nearly equal to their own, who had been concealed in the corn-field. Removed beyond the depressing influence of their timid officers, the native courage of the men was brought into action; and rushing forward to the fence which skirted the field, or sheltered behind the hay-cocks, they received the enemy with a sharp fire, holding him at bay until reinforced by forty or fifty of their comrades, who voluntarily crossed the creek to their aid. Their augmented numbers soon enabled them to drive their opponents from the fence and corn-field; but these, being soon reinforced in turn, drove back the Americans, who retired until joined by others, when they again pushed the British beyond the contested ground. Every moment increased the number of combatants, for the camp of the Connecticut regiment was almost deserted, and the creek and meadow, which were yesterday thronged with a defeated army, were now alive with the crowd of soldiers as eagerly crossing in the opposite direction, to fight instead of flying. Even the officers plucked up courage, and found sufficient resolution to enter spiritedly into the action, assuming command of their troops, and forming them in order for receiving the enemy's attack. The skirmish, begun by straggling soldiers, now assumed something of the proportions of a battle. Backward and forward, over the ground now crossed by Second and Third avenues, flowed the tide of strife, until the increasing numbers of the Americans enabled them to completely rout the enemy, and drive him from the corn-field. Fearing, however, that the pursuit might lead them into a position from which the overpowering forces encamped in

the vicinity might cut off their retreat, they contented themselves with the possession of the contested field.

And now succeeded one of the strangest incidents in the history of panics. The troops, whose courage had been so feeble the day before, passed beyond the bounds of courage to the wildest temerity. The faint-hearted and panic-stricken soldiers of yesterday, who, under the disheartening impressions of a first battle-field, resigned themselves to the cowardly fears which oppressed them, were to-day fired with all the ardor of heroes, and voluntarily rushed forward into dangers ten-fold greater than those from which they so lately had shrunk appalled.

Several of their number had fallen, though, owing to the protection of the stone walls and hay-cocks, none were killed; but some of the wounded were believed to be mortally hurt. What was the loss of the British, in the wavering fight was not ascertained. The regiment was unsupported in its mad enterprise, as no other troops guarded the neck, except the small garrison at Red Hook redoubt. Yet the officers and men seem to have adopted the desperate resolution of entrenching, and remaining on the ground. It is incredible that this insane enterprise could have been known to the commanding General; but, if it were, he abandoned the regiment to its fate, as reinforcements from his lines, if possible, would have hazarded too much for a prudent commander to send them, even with a great military object in view. It illustrates the confused state of affairs at this period, and the wretched discipline of the army, that such a dangerous and aimless movement could have been made, unauthorized by his orders, and probably without ever coming to his knowledge.

The regiment was now occupying the rising ground on the borders of the salt meadows, the position being covered with young forest trees, which the men quickly felled and constructed into a log breast-work that would protect them from a cavalry charge. It is probable that the temerity implied in a single regiment's occupying a position so exposed, thrust forward a mile or more beyond the lines, with a deep and dangerous creek in its rear, appeared so incredible to the enemy, that he respected the movement on account of an importance and strength which only existed in his imagination.

There is nothing which produces such unexpected results as folly. The operations of reason are confined within a narrow zodiac; but the orbits of folly have an eccentricity whose latitude can never be calculated. It is probable that the British officers, trained in a military school which taught them "always to expect the enemy to do what they themselves would do in the same situation," could not comprehend that a movement of such hazard should have been made by other than a powerful body of troops; and the day waned before they had decided upon their plan of attack.

In the meanwhile a soaking rain fell upon the unsheltered regiment, and so damaged the ammunition that it was mostly unfit for use; and had the detachment been attacked in this condition, even by a much inferior force, the whole of it must have been killed or captured. The account we have of the affair, from one of the combatants, is so vague in its description of the localities of different events, as to leave it impossible for us to decide on which side of the creek the regiment was encamped at evening

on the twenty-ninth, when it was paraded, and ordered to exercise in platoon-firing. This whimsical and dangerous manœuvre, in the presence of the enemy, which under other circumstances might have caused a general alarm and movement of the American forces, was productive of one good result, in exhibiting the fact that, in consequence of the rain, the ammunition was nearly ruined, and the guns so fouled as to be useless until cleaned.

This military exercise, continued until dusk, was not participated in by all the regiment; for long before that hour, numbers of the soldiers, to escape exposure to the showers, had straggled away to such shelter as the country afforded, and, unfortunately for themselves, had been successful in their search. The narrator of these incidents himself visited a barn, at the distance of half a mile from the camp, to procure some straw to protect him while lying on the wet ground; and was hailed from the top of the hay-mow, which nearly filled the building, by some of his comrades. After ascertaining his name, they exhibited an indolent curiosity regarding the engagement of their own regiment with the enemy, which the platoon firing had led them to believe must have taken place. From the dangers of this supposed battle, they had carefully sheltered themselves, with a prudence which their previous daring would scarcely have led us to anticipate.

CHAPTER VII.

The Retreat.

Night came at last, to close the long, gloomy twenty-ninth of August. With grim tenacity, amid hunger, exposure, and defeat, the American army still held the lines of entrenchment around the village of Brooklyn. Still fell the rain in frequent showers, as on the preceding day; and still continued the skirmishing, along the line of entrenchments, now rising to the roar of battle, and now declining to the scattering fire of a picket guard. All day the heavy discharges from the battery in the British redoubt were sustained; concerning the effects of which on Fort Putnam, at which they were principally directed, our patriot countrymen preserve their usual reticence. As evening drew on, and the gloom of the beclouded day deepened into the darkness of a stormy night, the noise of conflict ceased; but another sound, less alarming to the ear of the novice, but more ominous of approaching danger to experienced soldiers, broke upon the stillness. It was the heavy muffled clang of the enemy's entrenching tools, breaking the earth across the Brooklyn farms at a little distance in front of the entrenchments, and heaping it into a wall of circumvallation around the land side of the devoted town. It was remarked that the sounds of the besiegers' labor on their parallels, seemed much nearer than on the previous night. No better evidence was

needed of the confidence felt by the enemy in the hopelessness of the situation of their destined victims. Instead of assaulting their lines, to anticipate their possible escape, the British were only solicitous to hem them in with an impenetrable wall.

Thus ended the third day of the siege of Brooklyn. It was now evident that a few hours would decide the conflict. And, while the forces on either side pause inactive, let us glance at some of the obscurer causes which affected the minds of their commanders, and influenced their respective determinations.

Not the least among the sources of the demoralizing influences affecting the American troops, was the method by which their officers received their appointment. The various Committees of Safety, who recommended the officers for promotion, based their recommendations upon information obtained by an occasional visit to the camp, whose gossip and scandal were then as potent in making heroes or destroying hard-earned reputations, as are the newspaper reports of our day.[1] The popular origin of these revolutionary tribunals, compelled their members to listen with open ears to the whimpering tales of cowardly stragglers. Not unfrequently the *ex parte* statements of skulkers from the duty of the camp, and the dangers of the battle-field, were the only trial which a brave and meritorious officer was permitted, before the infliction of a stinging rebuke from his State Committee, or the severer punishment of witnessing the promotion of some unworthy favorite over his head. An instance, not without interest to us, both

[1] See *Reed*, note, p. 241 ; also *Graydon's Memoirs*.

on account of its fine illustration of the manners of the time, and of its relation to the occurrences on the battle-field, is narrated by Capt. Graydon.

A dancing master of Philadelphia, named Menzies, had by virtue of his skill promoted himself in the social rank to fencing master; and the Committee of Safety, conceiving that his management of the sword eminently fitted him for the office, had made him adjutant of one of the Pennsylvania regiments. Engaged in the combat on the Flatbush hills, with what credit to himself or service to the republic we are not informed, when the fatal lines of Hessian infantry and British grenadiers had fully enclosed his broken and retreating regiment, this officer found all the avenues for escape completely barred. The dreadful massacre of his comrades had begun, and on every side he saw only an infuriated and merciless foe. By extraordinary good fortune and adroitness, he was enabled to secrete himself in a thicket of the forest, until darkness prevented the betrayal of his nationality by his uniform. On crawling from his concealment, he was enabled to answer the challenges of the Hessian sentinels, and the queries of their comrades — thanks to his Pennsylvania Dutch parentage — in German. Thus allaying their suspicions, by excellent address, and equal fortune, he was enabled to elude the sentries, and to rejoin his surviving comrades within the Brooklyn entrenchments. His skill in the management of his feet had perhaps contributed to make him a fencer, and his adroitness with his hands had given him the rank of lieutenant; and now this fortunate use of his tongue was considered a warrant for his promotion over all the line officers to the rank of

major. Thus rewarded for his good fortune in being neither killed or captured, he served with credit, and proved a worthy officer; but his good conduct did not exculpate the Committee from gross injustice to the meritorious officers whom their favoritism had deprived of due promotion. And to the unfitness of many of the subordinate officers must be attributed the inefficiency of their troops.

The behavior of the Pennsylvania regiments, however, throughout the week of skirmishes and the day of defeat, was in striking contrast to the insubordination, and even poltroonery, of some of the New England troops, and to the unreliable character of the Long Island militia. The roll of officers, whose services at this time deserved honorable mention, included many names of Pennsylvanians. The brave Col. Hand, who commanded the riflemen that were engaged in four severe skirmishes at Flatbush; the equally brave though less fortunate Col. Atlee, commanding Stirling's advanced guard at Gowanus, where he was taken prisoner; Cols. Shee and Magaw, and Lieut. Col. Cadwallader — these are only a few of the names of Pennsylvanians who deserve the grateful remembrance of their countrymen.

Nothing, however, relating to the affairs of the Revolution, affects us with such astonishment, as does the conjuncture of three events, that seem inexplicable: — the neglect of Lord Howe to use the great armada he commanded in aiding his brother's movements on land; the omission of Gen. Howe to secure the results of his great victory, by carrying the American entrenchments in an immediate assault; and, lastly, after the delay of Washington to

extricate his forces from their dangerous position immediately upon the defeat, his sudden and complete reversal of his decision to fight a battle behind his entrenchments. Our surprise at the delay of Lord Howe is lessened when we learn that, for much of the time, the wind and tide were insurmountable obstacles to his advance; but other causes weighed heavier than all the anchors in his fleet in detaining his ships from the passage between the batteries on Brooklyn Heights, and the heavy guns lining the New York shore.

On the twenty-eighth of June, just two months before, another British admiral had led ten vessels of war, carrying two hundred and sixty guns, in the endeavor to force a passage past a wretched redoubt on Sullivan's Island, in Charleston harbor. The loss of two hundred men, and the bare escape of his half-foundering ships from entire destruction, had seemed to Sir Peter Parker but slightly compensated for by the trifling damage inflicted on the Palmetto fort, and by the killing and wounding of thirty-two rebels.

A month before, five vessels, of the fleet now under Lord Howe's command, had sailed up the North River, past the distant batteries on Paulus' Hook, and at the foot of Hubert street. Favored as they were, by a brisk gale and a strong flood-tide, they had nevertheless not sped so fast as to prevent their being hulled several times in their passage. These events afforded no favorable presage for Lord Howe's fleet, in attempting to force its way into the East River.

The influences which affected the mind of Gen. Howe, through the recollections of Ticonderoga and Bunker Hill,

have already been referred to. But those which determined the judgment of Washington may claim a moment's attention.

He had witnessed, from the redoubt on the summit of Ponkiesberg, the total rout of Stirling's division, and the slaughter of the Maryland battalion. To protect the disarmed and exhausted fugitives from utter annihilation, and secure the withdrawal of his artillery, it was necessary that fresh troops should be immediately brought to their relief. For the purpose of expediting the march of these reinforcements, he had crossed the river to New York, and ordered every regiment which could be spared from its defenses to Long Island. The urgent necessity for the presence of these troops in the Brooklyn lines was too apparent to allow hesitation, as nothing was more probable than an immediate assault upon the works. Indeed, so imminent was it believed to be, that Washington's personal attention was given to bringing forward the troops to resist it. He had paused long enough to assure himself that the attack on the exterior lines had been made by the entire British army, whose long columns, deploying into line of battle, could be seen by him from within his own lines. The presence of the British Commander-in-chief, and his Generals, indicated that every corps of the seventeen thousand men composing the invading force, was at length in the American front; and this was not only confirmed by the report of spies and fugitives, but was plainly revealed by the uniforms which distinguished them. The long lines of bright scarlet which stretched up the hills through the woods, now appearing in rank across the cleared fields, and now

REDOUBT ON PONKIESBERG.

hidden by the dense foliage, marked the presence of Percy, and Cornwallis, with the grenadiers and infantry. Further to the south, on the hills above the Porte Road, heavy masses of men, in blue uniforms, faced with red, made it equally certain that De Heister and his eight thousand Hessians were overlooking the feeble lines. Two miles to the right, at Gowanus, the force under Gen. Grant, which through the fatal night of the twenty-sixth had made such threatening demonstrations, and against whose delusive attacks Lord Stirling had all the morning breasted his feeble corps, menacingly rested on its arms. Close on the American left hung the strong reserve of Robertson, momentarily threatening assault.

Thus Washington was certified of the presence of four heavy columns of the enemy, which had girt his army around as with a wall of steel. On front and flanks they thronged, with all the dread enginery of war; the hills, which overlooked and governed his position, were crowned with their batteries; and the woods and fields in his front swarmed with the squadrons which had overwhelmed one-half his force, and now held the ground on which two thousand of his soldiers were perishing with their wounds, or already silent in death.[1] But even from these sad events, and these ominous tokens of the future, the mind of Washington derived a knowledge which lightened the gloom that to every other mind seemed impenetrable. No more indubitable evidence of the greatness and calmness of his intellect is needed, than the confident decision it formed on the instant of overwhelming disaster. Even

[1] *Elking.*

while snatching from total destruction the remnants of the awful wreck around him, his mind had seized this great fact, which, amid the darkness of defeat, stood plainly revealed to him :— *the entire forces of the enemy were in his front.* The obscurity which had so long veiled the purposes of the foe had at last cleared away; and the blow which for a month had hung impending over him, had fallen, but not on the vital part it had threatened. And now, his next step would be on firmer ground.

Hitherto, it had remained uncertain, which of two movements that seemed equally to invite the enemy to their adoption, would be chosen. Either promised brilliant success to the British, whenever the combined fleet and army should use with vigor their formidable advantages of men and ordnance; while it was the misfortune of Washington that he must manœuvre his forces as if certain of the performance of both designs.

With all these facts before us, it is more than strange that it should have been left to the accidents of chance, and the influence of Col. Reed, to determine the mind of Washington, and induce him to yield the original designs of his judgment. It has not escaped the sharp criticism of historians; and Mr. Bancroft throws much doubt upon the whole statement, as indicating a feebleness of decision in the Commander-in-chief, which his whole life belies. It is not necessary, however, for the refutation of the assumption of Col. Reed's personal influence, to invalidate the truth of the occurrence of the incidents narrated by his biographer. We cannot restrain our incredulous wonder that the apprehension of a danger so imminent should have come so late to the mind of Washington, and

that a decision of such incalculable magnitude in its consequences, should have been left to the concurrence of such accidental and trivial incidents for its formation. The chance visit of the adjutant-general and his friends to the battery on Red Hook; the fortuitous lifting of the fog for a single moment, which permitted them a glimpse of the fleet preparing to weigh anchor; the timidity or circumspection of Col. Shee; and the energy, scarcely less than presumptuous, which urged the unwelcome view of the danger of his position upon the attention of Washington,— were things so slight, that we hesitate to believe that they could have reversed the deliberate verdict of his judgment. Whatever had been his previous intentions, however, the action of the Commander-in-chief was now as prompt as his decision had seemed tardy.

A council of war was at once convened at head-quarters, in the Pierrepont mansion, standing on the ground now occupied by Montague street, near the foot-bridge. It was late in the afternoon of the twenty-ninth of August, when this memorable council met. It consisted of Maj. Gen. Putnam, Maj. Gen. Spencer, and Brig. Gens. Mifflin, McDougal, Parsons, Scott, Wadsworth, and Fellows. Alas! there was one, the bravest, truest soldier, whose seat at that council was unfilled, and whose place on earth would soon be vacant forever. The noble, generous Woodhull was at this very hour dying of his wounds at Jamaica. There were other vacancies at that council-board, which could not fail to call up the saddest memories. The heroic Stirling, whose self-devotion had nearly gained for him the palm of martyrdom, lay a prisoner on board of the enemy's fleet; and the brave, impetuous

Sullivan was fretting his fevered energy away, under the guard of British bayonets. Gen. Washington at once presented the threatening aspect of affairs, and solicited the opinions of the members of the council. There was no want of unanimity there. The presence of the awful peril which surrounded them, the necessity for instant decision, and the fearful consequences of the isolation of this wing of the American army, stilled all the suggestions of personal vanity or of selfish ambition; and the decision to abandon the Brooklyn lines, and retreat across the River, was at once taken. The council have left on record a full statement of the reasons for that determination, from a perusal of which we can learn much of that traverse of thought by which it was reached.

"*Aug.* 29*th*, 1776. It was submitted to the consideration of the council whether, under all the circumstances, it would not be eligible to leave Long Island and its dependencies, and remove to New York. Unanimously agreed in the affirmative, for the following reasons:

First. Because our advanced party have met with a defeat, and the wood was lost where we expected to make a principal stand.

Second. The great loss sustained in the death and captivity of several valuable officers and their battalions, or a large portion of them, had occasioned great confusion and discouragement among the troops.

Third. The heavy rain, which fell two days and nights without intermission, had injured the arms, and spoiled a great part of the ammunition; and the soldiers, being without arms, and obliged to lay in the lines, were worn out, and it was to be feared would not remain in them by any order.

Fourth. From the time the enemy moved from Flatbush, several large ships had endeavored to get up, as supposed, into the East River, to cut off our communication (by which the whole army would have been destroyed) but, the wind being north-east, could not effect it.

Fifth. Upon consulting with persons of knowledge of the harbor, they were of the opinion that small ships might come between Long Island and Governor's Island, where there were no obstructions, and which would cut off the communication effectually; and they also were of the opinion that the hulks sunk between Governor's Island and the city of New York, were of no sufficient security for obstructing that passage.

Sixth. Though our lines were fortified by some strong redoubts, yet a great part of them were weak, *being abatised with brush*, and affording no strong cover, so that there was reason to apprehend they might be forced; which would put our troops in confusion, and, having no retreat, they must have been cut to pieces or made prisoners.

Seventh. The divided state of the troops renders our defense very precarious, and the duty of defending long and extensive lines in so many different places, without proper conveniences and cover, so very fatiguing, that the troops had become dispirited by their incessant duty and watching.

Eighth. Because the enemy had sent several ships of war into the Sound, to a place called Flushing bay; and, from the information received that a part of their troops was moving across Long Island that way, there was reason to apprehend they meant to pass overland, and form an encampment above King's Bridge, in order to cut off

and prevent all communication between our army and the country beyond them, or to get in our rear."

The preparations for this important movement, scarcely less fraught with danger than its alternative, were entered upon with the profoundest caution and secrecy. Everything which could convey the slightest intimation of the design to the enemy, was carefully avoided; and never, perhaps, for a movement so important, were the plans more skilfully devised, or was the performance of them more exact, where a thousand untoward events might have destroyed them. It was little that the boats for transporting the army were abundant in New York. They must be gathered with expedition and secrecy, and the troops transferred to the opposite shore during the short night of midsummer. Even the management of the boats by skilled oarsmen was important; for that service could not be left to the clumsiness of common soldiers. Fortunately, the necessities of the occasion were not greater than the means at hand for meeting them. Col. Glover's Marblehead regiment provided seven hundred of the ablest men for this service, whose stout arms could safely and swiftly pass the boats through the dense fog; and they were accordingly withdrawn from the extreme left of the line, for that purpose.

At the same time that all the troops were warned to prepare for an attack upon the enemy, orders were quietly communicated to the alternate regiments along the front to fall in line; and long before those on the right and left were aware of any movement, their comrades had silently moved away into the darkness, and the void was only felt, without being known. Often the first intimation that

adjoining regiments received of the departure of those on their right and left, was the whispered order to extend their own lines, and cover the space so mysteriously vacated. Again and again was this manœuvre performed, on the constantly thinning line; and one regiment after another flitted away into the gloom, until nothing but a long line of sentinels occupied the breast-works, and preserved the empty show of a defense.

Within the little fort on Ponkiesberg, during the battle of the twenty-seventh, were stationed some of the Queens county militia. Whether this disposition of the forces, styled 'six months volunteers,' was made with the design of securing the guns of the fort, or the troops themselves, we do not learn.

It is especially noted, that a company commanded by Capt. Jacob Wright, enlisted principally from Jamaica, was here stationed; and, although its members may have been the more patriotic of the citizens of that town, yet when we remember what strong persuasions the provincial Congress was compelled to use in Queens county, it is difficult to repel the thought that apprehension of their loyalty may have influenced this disposition of them. This company, and another from Kings county, commanded by Capt. Van Nuys, were attached to Col. Lasher's first New York regiment, which was engaged in the battle, and lost several of its officers, among whom was Major Abeel, who was slain. One hundred and twenty grenadiers formed a part of Col. Lasher's command; and when the plan of retreat had been decided upon, these men were disposed at regular intervals along the breast-works, each carrying, in addition to his musket, six hand-

grenades. The narrator of this fact gives another statement, also, which indicates the minuteness of detail by which Washington concealed his intentions, alike from the enemy, and from his own troops. Two regiments would be withdrawn in silence from the lines, and, after marching for some distance towards the ferry, one would diverge to the right or left, and return to the entrenchments, while the other was pushed rapidly across the River.

So perfectly was the mystery of the design preserved, by these manœuvres, that it was the prevailing belief in the army that they portended a general assault upon the British lines on the morrow. There were not wanting, in so large a number of participants, instances of incaution, that might have betrayed the design to the enemy; one of which, from the rank of the person, had almost the turpitude of crime. A soldier, who was being relieved from duty at the breast-works, overheard an officer say, in a tone of voice that might have been heard by the enemy beyond them, "We are going to retreat." But this breach of discipline was very slight, compared with what the same soldier heard from the incautious lips of Gen. Putnam. While the company of this soldier was in the act of being withdrawn in silence from the entrenchments, Putnam, in answer probably to a question, said, in a voice audible to more than one, that 'the army was retreating.' There were within the Brooklyn lines at that time, hundreds of timid friends to American liberty, who would gladly have purchased their peace with the British government at the price of this information. Many a warm loyalist would have periled his life in conveying the astounding news to the British camp; and then, woe to that

drooping and flying army! But the escape from the danger was another of those slender threads, on which hung the destiny of America. Strong enough for its purpose, nevertheless; for the Invincible arm sustained it.

Not far from Fort Putnam, and connecting with the Pennsylvania battalions, the worn survivors of Col. Smallwood's Maryland and Col. Haslett's Delaware regiments held a position believed to be one of the greatest danger, which was now increased, also, by the withdrawal of Col. Glover's Marblehead men. Torn with the shock of battle, and enfeebled by the terrible and exhausting exertions of its struggle, these brave men still kept the post of peril; and on their courage and devotion the Commander-in-chief depended for covering the retreat. Orders had been communicated, soon after dark, to the battalions of Shee, Magaw, Smallwood, and Haslett, to hold themselves in readiness for an attack upon the enemy which was to be made during the night. The gloom of their apprehensions, which inaction had deepened almost into despair, was not relieved by the prospect of a night assault upon an entrenched and wary enemy. Nothing could exceed the sad despondency which fell upon these brave and loyal troops, in this gloomy hour. Weakened by want of sleep and food for two days and nights, exposed to the inclemency of the elements, and depressed by the knowledge of the dangers which surrounded them, they realized how feeble would be the blow they could strike against their powerful opponent. Their ammunition was impaired by dampness, their guns were fouled by rain and rust, and few of their number were armed with bayonets; while, added to these disqualifications for success-

ful assault, they keenly felt the feebleness of the support to be afforded them by the unmanned and panic-stricken troops around. Awaiting their orders for the dread trial of battle, the officers of these battalions sadly conversed together upon the probable fate of themselves and their command, in this perilous enterprise. We have an authentic record of the sentiments, and currents of thought, which prevailed among these brave men; and the tone of sad resolve indicates the magnitude of the peril of their situation. Few of them expected to behold the morning light. "It is," they said, "a forlorn hope, which none can expect to survive; but it is our duty to obey like soldiers."[1] And although their souls, inspired with nature's dread, shrank back from the dark abyss into which another hour might plunge them, yet the knitted brows, and stern features, were doubtless witnesses of a great and unflinching resolution which even the apparition of death could not shake. Each turned to the other, in the hope that his comrade would survive, with affectionate remembrances for friends and relatives. And then there were softer messages for gentle ones, and declarations of bequests, and gifts of remembrance, which occupied the wasting hours of the earlier night.

There was one among these young officers who dwelt upon the extreme rashness of the contemplated attack with growing incredulity. This gentleman was Capt. Graydon, who has left a most interesting and a perfectly truthful account of the events of the Revolution, in which he was an actor; and on whose mind, the object of the

[1] *Graydon's Memoirs.*

manœuvre flashed in a sort of revelation. He saw that the retreat of the army from its dangerous position had been decided upon, and that the order for assault was a cover for the design. His surmise was quickly communicated to his comrades; by whom, although at first they were incredulous, it was received like a reprieve from sentence to death.

Midnight had come, and a deep low murmur was distinguishable in the American camp, from which they were separated by a mile of unoccupied ground, that indicated some important movement now in progress, which the darkness entirely concealed. At length these muffled sounds died away, moving in the direction of the River two miles distant, until the only noise which broke the silence of the night was the dull, threatening stroke of pick and bar, proceeding from the enemy's entrenching force.

At two o'clock the sudden explosion of a heavy gun, apparently from one of the American redoubts on the right, burst with a menacing roar upon the night, and sent a shock to many an anxious heart. 'Was it the signal for the expected assault?' or, 'Was it the fire from a battery, to repel an approaching column of the enemy?' It is possible that the explosion was within the American lines, and caused by the friction of spiking the gun; but, from whatever cause, none who heard it probably ever forgot the awful sensations of overwhelming alarm and surprise, which rushed upon their minds. The intense and appalling darkness of the night, the strained faculties, the uncertainty as to the design of their movement, the terrible hazard of its issue, the great interest at stake, with the

long interval of anxious suspense and fearful expectation broken suddenly by the loud roar of this explosion,—these left nothing which the human soul is capable of feeling, to increase the shock of the sensation.

Another of those slight filaments on which then hung suspended tremendous issues, is exhibited in an incident which very nearly threatened destruction to the American army. And, as its story forms one of the most curious episodes of this great drama, we shall narrate it at length.

One of the wealthiest and most reputable citizens of the village of Brooklyn, prior to the Revolution, was John Rapalye, whose story is already familiar to us. His dwelling house, situated near the River, between Fulton and Main streets, entirely overlooked the place of embarkation for the retreating army; and within it sat a vindictive woman, brooding over her wrongs, who for an hour seemed to hold the destiny of that army in her hand. Constantly irritated by her enforced separation from her husband, Mrs. Rapalye had nurtured a spirit of hostility to the whigs, which fitted her for accomplishing a revenge so vast and sweeping, that one who had designed it might have shrunk at its magnitude and might. The frequent insults to which the loyalist families were subjected by the bitter partisanship of the times, thus kept alive resentments that only needed opportunity to be fearfully revealed.

It is said that one day a party of the undisciplined soldiers who had gathered here for the defense of the Brooklyn lines, who were exercising in artillery-firing on the Heights, in mere wantonness, or inflamed by the fierce spirit of party zeal, directed their gun upon the house of

the tory Rapalye, and lodged a shot in its walls.[1] The opportunity for avenging such wrongs and insults as she had suffered, was now eagerly seized. The narrative of her action for that purpose, is from her own lips.

Early in the evening her quick ears, made more sensitive by the watchfulness of resentment, had caught the sound of unusual movements in the camp of the American army. Soon after, she noticed the gathering upon the shore, near the ferry, in front of her house, of great numbers of empty boats, which, for several days past, had been coming loaded to the water's edge with armed men. Now, they floated by hundreds, as she could perceive by the boat lanterns, without other occupants than the oarsmen. It was evident that some important movement was intended; and when, at eight o'clock, the first detachment of the retreating army marched down to the water's edge and pushed off in the boats, the whole sagacious design, with all the vast advantages of a knowledge of it to the British, was revealed to her. A vindictive and resolute woman, fired with the keenest sense of injury and desire for vengeance, had penetrated the secret, on whose preservation depended the lives of hundreds of her countrymen! Woe to their firesides, and their loved ones, if her resolution and her fortune should be equal.

To convey the information to the British camp in person, was impossible; for she was too well known to hope to cross the American lines without suspicion. A negro slave was the only person available for her purpose; and to his feeble intelligence she was compelled to intrust the

[1] Tradition preserves the story that this outrage was committed to punish Mrs. Rapalye for ostentatiously persisting in drinking the prohibited Tea!

transmission of this momentous secret. He was immediately dispatched with orders to communicate the intelligence to the first British officer he could find. The slave, favored by the darkness of the night, and aided by the craft with which the lower intellects are endowed, succeeded in evading the American sentinels, and, after passing the lines of entrenchment, made his way to the nearest camp of the British forces. It seemed as if the hand of fate, reluctant to permit the escape of that doomed army, was touching the dial-plate of history, to turn the pointers backward a century! But the malign purpose failed. At the very point of culmination, when the fate of the American army seemed irrevocably sealed, one of those slender yet invincible barriers which sometimes change the destiny of nations, was interposed, to prevent the fulfilment of the revengeful woman's project.

The guard by which the negro was halted, was composed of Hessians, ignorant of the English language, and thus incapable of comprehending the importance of his mission. It is rendered probable, from this fact, that the black had found his egress from the American lines between Freeke's mill-pond and Fort Greene, in front of which portion of them the Hessians were encamped. Instead of conducting their prisoner to an English officer, by whom all the vast consequence of his information would have been instantly comprehended and acted upon, the captors committed the negro to the custody of a guard, as if suspecting him of some crime. The morning was breaking when an English officer visited the post, and heard his statement; but the camp was then already aroused with the same amazing news from other quarters.

As already stated, it was eight o'clock in the evening when the first regiment was silently paraded, under pretense of attacking the enemy; and it soon after crossed from the beach, between Fulton and Main streets. The embarkation took place under the superintendence of Gen. McDougal, who had been selected by Gen. Washington for this important office. To Gen. Mifflin, commanding the Pennsylvania battalions of Shee and Magaw, and the poor remnants of Cols. Smallwood's and Haslett's battalions, was confided the kindred and equal task of covering the retreat. Washington and his staff were on horseback during the entire night; and, as some accounts state, never left the Brooklyn ferry-stairs until the last of the troops had been embarked. We shall see, however, in the progress of our narrative, that Washington's anxiety did not permit him to remain at this point during the whole period occupied by the retreat. The British historians of this campaign were fond of reiterating the charge that Washington, early in the evening, had sought security in New York.[1] Yet nothing is more certain than his continued presence during the retreat, and his personal supervision of the details of this wonderful military movement, which history has ranked among the greatest victories it records. All night long sat, on his gray horse, that grand figure, towards which were turned so many half-despairing eyes, that brightened when they saw that Washington was there. Every movement was executed under his personal direction; and so perfect was his anticipation of each emergency, that nothing was left to the hazard

[1] *Knight's Pictorial History of England.*

of chance. One event alone occurred to mar the completeness of the performance of this stupendous project; and to that the panic and insubordination of his troops largely contributed.

The narrative of this, and of other incidents of that eventful night, by one of the actors in its scenes, is so incapable of paraphrase or abbreviation, without injury to its dramatic interest, that it must be quoted entire. It is the brave Col. Hand who speaks:

"In the evening of the twenty-ninth of August, 1776, with several other commanding officers of corps, I received orders to attend Major-general Mifflin. When assembled, Gen. Mifflin informed us that, in consequence of the determination of a board of general officers, the evacuation of Long Island, where we then were, was to be attempted that night; that the Commander-in-chief had honored him with the command of the covering party, and that our corps were to be employed in the service. He then assigned us our stations, which we were to occupy as soon as it was dark, and pointed out Brooklyn Church as an alarm post, to which the whole were to repair, and unitedly oppose the enemy, in case they discovered our movements, and made an attack in consequence. My regiment was posted in a redoubt, on the left [Fort Putnam], and in the lines on the right of the great road below [north of] Brooklyn Church. Capt. Henry Miller commanded in the redoubt. Part of a regiment of the flying camp in the state of New York were, in the beginning of the night, posted near me; but they showed so much uneasiness at their situation, that I petitioned Gen. Mifflin to suffer them to march off. After

that, nothing remarkable happened at my post till about two o'clock in the morning, when Alexander Scammel, since adjutant-general, who that day acted as aid-de-camp to the Commander-in-chief, came from the left, inquiring for Gen. Mifflin, who happened to be with me at the time. Scammel told him that the boats were waiting, and that the Commander-in-chief was anxious for the arrival of the troops at the ferry. Gen. Mifflin said he thought Scammel must be mistaken; that he did not imagine the General could mean the troops he immediately commanded. Scammel replied that he was not mistaken, adding that he came from the extreme left, and had ordered all the troops he met to march; that, in consequence, they were all in motion; and that he should go on to give the same orders to others. Gen. Mifflin then ordered me to call in my advanced pickets and sentinels, to collect and form my regiment, and to march as soon as possible; and then quitted me. Having marched into the great road leading to the Church, I fell in with the troops retreating from the left of the lines; and, on arriving at the Church, I halted to take up my camp equipage, which in the night I had had carried there by a small party. Gen. Mifflin came up at that instant, and asked the reason of the halt. I told him, and he seemed very much displeased: 'Damn your pots and kettles, I wish the devil had them; march on.' I obeyed, but had not gone far before I perceived the front had halted, and hastening to inquire the cause, I met the Commander-in-chief, who perceived me and said: 'Is not that Col. Hand?' I answered in the affirmative. His Excellency said he was surprised at me, in particular; that he did not expect me

to abandon my post. I answered, that I had not abandoned it; that I had marched by order of my immediate commanding officer. The General replied that it was impossible. I told him I hoped if I could satisfy him I had the orders of Gen. Mifflin, he would not think me particularly to blame. He said he undoubtedly would not. Gen. Mifflin just then coming up, and asking what the matter was, his Excellency said: 'Good God! Gen. Mifflin, I am afraid you have ruined us by unseasonably withdrawing the troops from the lines.' Gen. Mifflin replied with some warmth: 'I did it by your order.' His Excellency declared that 'it could not be.' Gen. Mifflin swore, 'by —— I did;' and asked: 'Did Scammel act as an aid-de-camp for the day, or did he not?' His Excellency acknowledged he did. 'Then,' said Mifflin, 'I had orders through him.' The General replied: 'It is a dreadful mistake;' and informed him that matters were in such confusion at the ferry, that unless we could resume our posts before the enemy discovered we had left them, in all probability the most disagreeable consequences would follow. We immediately returned, and had the good fortune to recover our former stations, and keep them for some hours longer, without the enemy perceiving what was going forward."

From other sources we learn the frightful disorder into which affairs had fallen at the ferry, notwithstanding the efforts of Washington and his officers to control the troops. The panic, which had never relaxed its paralyzing hold on the minds of the more craven, had now infected even the bravest; and it was only the noble fellows who still held the entrenchments that preserved

their self-control and native courage. Within the lines resided a lady, whose husband and brother were officers of the American army, and present with their commands. During the dreadful uproar which prevailed, while the mob of soldiers, maddened by fear, was crowding the declivity from Sands street to the water, these officers, despairing of restoring order, and apprehensive of an immediate attack, rushed into the house, and desired her to fly with her child, as they expected every moment to be cut to pieces. The only avenue of escape was by the ferry; but the fugitive lady found that an impassable barrier of men, rendered ungovernable by fright, cut off her access to it. With all her exertions and entreaties she could not approach nearer to it than a quarter of a mile; and so great were the trepidation and anxiety, that she saw the soldiers in the rear mounting on the shoulders of their comrades in front, and clambering over their heads, to be nearer the means of escape.

A nobler sentiment controlled the fears with which the dangers of their situation naturally impressed the minds of the soldiers of the covering regiments, on the extreme left. Appointed to be the last to retire, daybreak was appearing when orders arrived for them to march. Forming without delay, they took their route in silence along the Wallabout road toward the Brooklyn Church, when suddenly it was announced that the British light-horse were charging on their rear. Improbable as was the report, it was so vehemently urged that the regiment formed to receive cavalry, the front rank kneeling, and presenting their leveled pikes, with which a portion of the men were armed, while their comrades stood behind

with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets. Scarcely had the four battalions recommenced their march, on discovering that they were unpursued, when it was found that the order to retreat was as unfounded as the alarm, having undoubtedly originated in the unfortunate error of Col. Scammel.

New orders arrived, from the Commander-in-chief, to return with the greatest expedition to their posts, and reoccupy the lines. It is difficult to conceive a situation of greater hazard, or one that would more severely try the courage of the bravest troops; but we have already seen how noble sentiments, and generous self-devotion, in these brave men, could still the weaker yet not less natural emotions, of love of life, and regret at quitting it.

Another hour dragged out its moments, each of which was golden with opportunity for the flying army, yet ever threatening to change into iron hail. Still this noble corps waited, and waited, in stern silence, on that dim and menacing dawn, along the Brooklyn entrenchments, lately thronged with their comrades now safe across the River. On their firm courage, their sublime devotion of their lives to their country, depended the most tremendous consequences; and the great task could only be accomplished by waiting, in the gloom of that sad morning, with an impassable River and a flying army in their rear, and the awakening hosts of a resistless and triumphant enemy in their front. There was nothing that they could do but stand and await the shock.

One of this forlorn hope has left a record of their common sentiment. The pangs of death would be but momentary. One resolute rush of the enemy, one hot and

murderous struggle, one irresistible torrent sweeping the parapet, and only to be breasted for a moment hand to hand, and all would be over! It is the sublimest courage thus to watch and to endure.

At length the imperative order came from Washington for the retreat; and, silent as they had stood through the long hours of that portentous night, they marched away. It was full time. The dawn was already struggling with the murky atmosphere which mercifully obstructed its rays. Already the enemy's scouts, and reconnoitering parties, warned by the unnatural silence, were stealing through the tangled *abatis*, and peering through the embrasures of the redoubts, or cautiously raising their heads above the parapets, to pierce the mystery of this ominous stillness.

Before daybreak, on the morning of the thirtieth, a party, composed of a corporal and six men, were reconnoitering the ground in front of the lines, and, finding no pickets or sentinels on post at that part of them, had pushed up close to the *abatis*. This they found much difficulty in penetrating, in the darkness; but at four o'clock they had crossed the ditch, and were cautiously peering over the breast-works. The universal silence, which at first had made them approach with still greater circumspection, now revealed the startling fact that the lines were abandoned. The information was immediately communicated to Major Montrose, the officer in command of the advanced guard; and in thirty minutes the pickets were pushed forward into the American works. There was still time for a movement of the British forces that would have proved disastrous to a part of the retreating army;

but the same want of accord between the British generals, which had more than once interposed a barrier to their success, again interfered to prevent the complete triumph of the British arms.

Gen. Robertson's brigade at this time occupied a position across the Jamaica and Gowanus roads; his advance being posted, as he asserts, at the distance of one hundred and twenty to two hundred yards from the American lines. The coolness that had been engendered by the events of the twenty-seventh, between Robertson and his Commander-in-chief, had not lessened in the interval, and the former seems to have determined that he would volunteer neither action nor advice. Gen. Robertson admitted, on his cross-examination by Gen. Howe, that he received information of the evacuation of the American camp in Brooklyn, before seven o'clock; yet nearly two hours had elapsed before he actually marched a detachment of his brigade to occupy the abandoned lines. He declared, on his examination, that he was awaiting orders from the commanding General; and seems to have been more animated by a desire to fasten the responsibility of gross neglect and bad management upon his Commander, than to avail himself of his important advantage. An hour previous to Robertson's movement, his pickets, light-horse, and advanced posts, had been in possession of the American redoubts and fortified lines.[1]

[1] At half-past eight the first brigade, commanded by Gen. Robertson in person, entered the lines; and soon after the fog so lifted that from the hill near High street, he could just discern the last boats of the retreating Americans push off from the shore, while the further side of the River was covered with those who had already made good their escape. So close were the British upon the rear of the Americans that several stragglers were

Four hours of the summer's morning had passed, and still an obscurity as of night hid the great events which were transpiring. Amid the gloom moved one majestic form, controlling the elements of discord, and struggling with inexhaustible energy, to master even the apparent decisions of fate. Unshaken by the terrors of that dreadful night, unmoved by the appalling dangers that threatened every instant to overwhelm that throng of despairing men, he sat on his gray battle horse, by the Brooklyn ferry, through those long hours of dismay, like the genius of destiny. On that stern, calm face, the conflicting emotions which swelled his heart, left no trace. All the tremendous possible disasters must have been clear to his apprehension. He saw how those thousands of unmanned and terror-stricken soldiers, would melt away before the awful storm of shot and shell that in another hour might rain upon them. He saw the enemy's batteries, of forty guns, wheel into position for close firing, on the hill at Concord and Prospect streets. Fifteen thousand bayonets gleamed on his vision as they sunk to the irresistible charge. And two thousand cavalry swept before his mental vision, in pursuit of the wretched fugitives who still survived. Thus, conscious of the dangers which impended, and unappalled by their imminence, he

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killed, or taken prisoners; among whom were three soldiers who had lingered to plunder, and on the approach of the advanced guard of the British, had hastened to their boat, but who were fired upon and compelled to yield. The light troops of the British reached Fort Stirling on the Heights in time to withdraw the spikes from the abandoned guns, and open fire upon some of the retreating boats. Notwithstanding the haste of the evacuation the British found but twenty-six guns, in the redoubts and fortifications; and these had been made as nearly useless as the necessity for silence and expedition would permit.

sat amid the tumult, whose genius was to mould these unpromising elements into a result that should vindicate, for all time, his unequalled power and endurance. Thus, tireless in energy while danger was nigh, and last in retreat when it was over, Washington, always greatest when everything seemed lost, saw his army extricated from the jaws of a destruction that had almost closed upon it.

There was one officer, who, at the little village of Jamaica, had listened with anxious ear to the distant booming of the cannon on the day of battle, who was now passing the last ordeal of humanity. The high station which he had held in the councils of the revolutionists, the grand moderation of his character, combined with the firmness, patriotism, and self-devotion for which he was remarkable, would under any circumstances have given him an honorable reputation. But when the acts of his pure life were crowned with the final sacrifice of martyrdom, Gen. Woodhull's name was enrolled among his country's noblest heroes. So much sorrow and indignation has his fate elicited, that the partisans of the murdered General and of his slayer, though a century is closing its shadows over the event, are still hotly contesting the indictment brought against the latter, by historians who have weighed the testimony on either side.

Gen. Nathaniel Woodhull had been earlier called into the service of his country, than many of his brother offi-

cers; for, like Washington, he had acquired some knowledge of military life in the old French war. He had been chosen President of the provincial Congress of New York, in which sat such distinguished revolutionists as Jay, Livingston, Schuyler, and Benson. At an early period in the formation of a military force, Woodhull had been appointed Brigadier-General of the State levies; and he commanded the district including the counties of Long Island.

It was considered important by the provincial Congress that Woodhull, from his intimate knowledge of the Island, should take personal command of the militia drafted from its towns; and, accordingly, soon after the landing of the British forces, he left the presidential chair for the open field. Information had reached New York that the enemy's troops were suffering from want of fresh provisions; and to prevent them from receiving a supply was to be the first object of Woodhull's attention. The ungracious task fell to his hands, therefore, of depriving his old neighbors of their cattle and grain.

From Yellow Hook to Jamaica, all the horses, cattle, and swine, were swept out in great droves upon the plains of Hempstead, or gathered within the Brooklyn lines. Columns of smoke, over every farm, indicated the work of destruction, in the burning stacks of grain and provender. The inhabitants were permitted, by the orders of the provincial Congress, to retain only that portion of their crops which was absolutely necessary for the sustenance of life. One cow, and one horse, was left in each neighborhood of three or four families. The provincial Congress had most unaccountably delayed the execution of one

important military measure until the 24th of August, two days after the landing of the enemy. This was the levy *en masse* of the militia of the Island. The inhabitants of Kings county, thus hurriedly armed, together with the Suffolk and Queens county regiments, commanded by Cols. Smith and Remsen, were placed under the command of Gen. Woodhull. Notwithstanding the provincial Congress of New York had fully provided for retaining its authority over the militia of the colony, by the appointment of its President to the command, that body, jealous of its own authority, or distrustful of the ability of its officers, still dictated the movements of the forces under their command. Gen. Woodhull was directed by this unmilitary authority to perform a service unworthy of his rank, and at a hazard which, perhaps, it was impossible for even military genius to foresee. Congress, by resolution, had provided for his support by the Long Island regiments of militia under Smith and Remsen, but the exigencies of the service prevented this.

Washington replied to the delegates of Congress, that 'he was afraid that it was too late to accomplish its tardy resolve of driving off all the cattle, and securing the provisions,' but gave his consent to detach Smith's and Remsen's regiments on that service. Congress at once directed a letter to be sent to Woodhull, informing him that these troops had marched, and would join him immediately. In the afternoon of the same day, the General received another letter from Congress, in which they notified him that they had adopted resolutions, two days previously, which prescribed the mode in which they wished their orders carried out.

So express and definite were these, that Woodhull must have felt that he was devoting himself to almost certain destruction in performing them, if Remsen's and Smith's regiments should fail to come up. How sensible he was of the imminent danger of his position, may be seen from his letter, in which he states his belief that these officers and troops would not be able to reach him. In the perusal of it, with a full comprehension of the dangers closing around him, we cannot withhold our sad admiration of the self-devotion and heroism which he exhibited: "I am now at Jamaica, with less than one hundred men; having brought all the cattle from the westward, south of the hills, and having sent them off with troops of horse, with orders to take all the rest eastward of this, to, and eastward of, Hempstead plains, and to put them into the fields, and set a guard over them. The enemy, I am informed, are entrenching from the Heights southward.

"I have now received yours, with several resolutions, which I wish it were in my power to put in execution; but unless Cols. Smith and Remsen, mentioned in yours, join me with their regiments, I shall not be able; for the people are all moving east, and I cannot get any assistance from them. I shall continue here as long as I can, in hopes of a reinforcement; but if none comes soon, I shall retreat, and drive the stock before me into the woods. Cols. Smith and Remsen, I think, cannot join me. Unless you can send me some other assistance, I fear I shall soon be obliged to quit this place. I hope soon to hear from you." [1]

[1] Letter dated Jamaica, August 27th, 1776, and directed to The Honorable the Convention of the State of New York, at Haarlem.

It is evident that this letter was written on the morning of the twenty-seventh, before the sound of the enemy's guns had announced the closing of his lines around the fated Sullivan and Stirling.

The unskilful generalship of the provincial Congress, had at length brought on the catastrophe which a divided command must always produce. General Woodhull, instead of being directed to employ Capt. Suydam's troop of horse, and the cavalry from Queens county, in patrolling the road to Flatbush, where it was known the enemy was encamped in heavy force, was compelled, by the unmilitary council of legislative warriors, to perform the insignificant duty of herding cattle. In a military point of view, nothing more was necessary to guard against the surprise of the American army than to have extended Sullivan's left wing, not along the hills to Jamaica, but from near the Clove road to the head of any of the runs emptying into Canarsie Bay. As a defensive line in that direction was impossible, from the perfectly level character of the ground, and the small numbers who could be spared for its occupation, this part of the line should have been patrolled by numerous videttes.

For the command of such a service, Gen. Woodhull was well fitted, by his experience in the wild warfare of the French campaigns; and the troops of country horsemen were admirably adapted to perform the duty. Perfectly familiar with the wood-paths which threaded the forest, then covering the hills from New Utrecht to Jamaica, the advance of the British columns could not have been made so silently that some of those watching them would have failed to reach the American lines with the intelligence.

At ten o'clock the reinforcements, promised so confidently by Congress, had not arrived; and at that hour the roar of the enemy's artillery, answered by the heavy guns on the American fortifications, afforded sad evidence to Gen. Woodhull that his prognostications in his letter to Congress had been fulfilled, and that it was too late for reinforcements to reach him.

The repeated embassies to Gen. Washington from Congress had failed of persuading him to weaken his forces manning the Brooklyn intrenchments, already attenuated to the mere shadow of a line of defense. The Commander-in-chief at length positively declined to detach the two Long Island regiments from his army, for a distant and unimportant service; wondering, probably, at the quiet audacity of the assumption by Congress of his incompetence to command.

To the peril of his own situation, Woodhull's knowledge of the weakness of the American forces now added the most anxious apprehension for their safety. His scouts had informed him that the British had turned the American lines; and the fugitive inhabitants, who fled past him toward the east, kept him constantly informed of the advance of their outposts. Although he knew that reinforcements from Brooklyn were no longer possible, he still expected that troops would reach him by crossing the East River to Flushing bay, and marching across the Newtown and Jamaica hills.

To expedite the arrival of these troops, and thus enable him to hold a position that would check the enemy's advance eastward, he sent Jonathan Lawrence, his brigade Major, to the Convention, to enforce his representations by

a personal appeal. A few hours previously he had written to that body as follows:

"Enclosed I send you a copy of a letter from Col. Potter, who left me yesterday at eleven o'clock, after bringing about one hundred men to me at Jamaica.

"Major Smith has, I expect, all the rest who were to come from Suffolk county. There have about forty of the militia joined me from the regiments in Queens county, and about fifty of the troops belonging to Kings and Queens counties, which is nearly all I expect. I have got all the cattle southward of the hills in Kings county driven to the eastward of the cross road between the two counties, and have placed the guards and sentries from the north road to the south side of the Island, in order to prevent the cattle going back, and to prevent the communication of the tories with the enemy. I am within six miles of the enemy's camp. *Their light horse has been within two miles;* and unless I have more men our stay here will answer no purpose. We shall soon want to be supplied with provisions, if we tarry here."[1] In this painful state of uncertainty, Gen. Woodhull remained through the twenty-seventh, worn down with anxiety regarding the issue of the battle, which he knew had terminated in the advance of the British lines.

With the difficult task to perform, of sweeping a wide extent of country of sustenance for the enemy; his communications with head-quarters cut off; his command scattered so widely on their service as to be unvailable for defense; and the enemy's light horse pushed upon the main

[1] Letter dated West End of Queens county, August 27th, 1776.

road within two miles of his post — he was surrounded with elements of danger sufficient to have justified the abandonment of such a perilous and detached position, in the judgment of most officers.

There was, however, in the calm resolution of the old Presbyterian General's mind something of the stern indifference to results which characterized his Puritan ancestors, when employed, as they were wont to believe, as mere instruments for the purposes of the Almighty. It was well said by the historian, Silas Wood, "that the nature of the service in which the General was employed, and the force placed under him, were alike unworthy of his command." But it was indicative of the purity of his patriotism that he accepted at once a position in which he could be useful, though a more ambitious officer would have rejected it with scorn. "He had more military experience than most of the early officers of the revolutionary army, and no one in this State promised to make a better general officer."[1]

The failure of Congress to hold a session on the twenty-seventh, contributed to the melancholy result of the expedition; for his express returned on the morning of the twenty-eighth, with no other answer to his communication than a copy of the previous resolution of Congress. The great herd of cattle and horses on the plains, already half-famished for water, with which that vast prairie was so ill supplied, had been still further augmented in numbers, on the twenty-seventh, by the cattle from the rich farms of Newtown; and during the night, the General had

[1] Appendix 4; letters from *Journal of the Provincial Congress*, pp. 273, 276. folio. *Wood's L. I.*, p. 315.

removed his head-quarters to Carpenter's Junction, on the main road, two miles east of Jamaica.

It was here, on the morning of the twenty-eighth, that he wrote his last letter to the provincial Congress, almost the last official act of his life:

"I wrote two letters to you yesterday, one by express, and another by Mr. Harper; and also sent my brigade Major to you, to let you know my situation; and I expected an answer to some of them last night; but my express informed me he was detained till night for an answer. I have now received yours of the 28th, which is only a copy of the last, without a single word of answer to my letters, or to the messages of my brigade Major. I must again let you know my situation. I have about seventy men, and about twenty of the troop; which is all the force I have, or can expect, and I am daily growing less in number. The people are so alarmed in Suffolk that they will not any more of them march; and as to Cols. Smith and Remsen's regiments, they cannot join me, for the communication is cut off between us. I have sent about eleven hundred cattle to the great fields on the plains yesterday. About three hundred more have gone off this morning, to the same place; and I have ordered a guard of one officer and seven privates.

"They can get no water in these fields. My men and horses are worn out with fatigue. The cattle are not all gone off toward Hempstead; I ordered them yesterday, but they were not able to take them along. I brought yesterday about three hundred from Newtown. I think the cattle are in as much danger on the north as on the south side; and have ordered the inhabitants to remove them.

If you cannot send me an immediate reinforcement I am "[1] * * *

The abrupt termination of this letter is indicative of the harassing nature of the service in which Woodhull was employed. Major Lawrence had meantime appeared on the floor of Congress, and delivered his urgent message from the General. He stated also, that Dr. Abraham Riker had informed him, on his route, that the British had posted themselves during the twenty-seventh on the ridge of hills between Newtown and Jamaica, and, although they had entered many of the houses, none of these had been plundered of any thing but food. Congress could do nothing more than order the Major to present the request of Woodhull to Gen. Washington, with the information which he possessed of the route by which Smith's and Remsen's regiments could still reach the position of the former.

Mr. Van Wyck was on the same day ordered upon the perilous duty of a spy. He was directed to proceed immediately to Flushing, then known to be patrolled by scouting parties of the enemy, and obtain intelligence of their number and situation. He was also directed to obtain accurate information of the posts held by Woodhull; and to immediately dispatch a boat, conveying his message, through Flushing bay to New York. An important part of his duty was to ascertain and report upon the most favorable route for forwarding reinforcements. What more Mr. Van Wyck accomplished than to write a letter to Congress, containing the information demanded, we shall

[1] *Journal of Provincial Congress.*

never learn; as he probably fell, soon after, into the hands of some of the advanced guards of the British.[1]

It was not until the morning of the twenty-eighth that Congress sent Major Lawrence to Gen. Washington, with Woodhull's letter of the day previous, enclosed in one from that body.

One day of disaster had destroyed the military energy of these civic Generals; but they were still ready to proffer their advice to the Commander-in-chief upon the unfortunate subject of the cattle, the care of which had led to such great misfortunes on the day previous,— which misfortunes were to be crowned with one of less magnitude, but scarcely less sad, before the close of the same day. They stated that it was their opinion, that the stock on the Island might yet be removed beyond the enemy's reach, by the aid of Smith's and Remsen's troops; and that it was still practicable for this detachment to reach Woodhull, by a circuitous route.

Around the position of Gen. Washington, and his little army on Long Island, at that hour were closing in the fateful lines, beyond which all was gloomy and threatening as the grave. He had little time, and no troops, to spare for an exigency so distant, while the existence not only of

[1] Flushing, Aug. 28th, 1776.

To the Provincial Congress:

Gentlemen: I am informed by Thomas Thorn, a member of the committee, who has just come from Gen. Woodhull, that he was at Jamaica, and that he himself had just come from Whitestone; that the ships of war lay between Thorn's Point and Great Neck; and that there can be no danger in bringing up our men to this place, if we can get them up this evening. I think it will be proper to send this intelligence off as soon as possible, by the same boat, as I cannot get any other.

I am just going to Jamaica to the General.

I am, Gentlemen, Your most obedient, humble servant,

Cor's Van Wyck.

himself and his army, but of that very Congress, hung even then upon a hair. He still replied courteously, though the half-promise of two days previous was now changed to a firm refusal of the request. In his letter he indicates a plan of reinforcing Gen. Woodhull from Connecticut, by the detachment of a thousand men by Gov. Trumbull. Nothing now remained, that Woodhull could be expected to do, except to return beyond the reach of the enemy, or to gather in his little force on the best defensible position, and resist their advance to the last. The humane heart of Woodhull rejected this last alternative, from regard to the lives of his men, as promptly as his courage and self-devotion made him disdain the other.

Every communication from the Convention, whose officer he was, exhibited their strong desire that he should retain his position in the western part of Queens county, and encouraged him to expect a reinforcement. Not only had no intelligence been received from that body to the contrary, but the delay of Major Lawrence, who was detained by the Convention, strengthened his conviction that the reinforcement was on the march.

To have retreated, under such circumstances, seemed to him a violation of military rules, and might have subjected him to the imputation of a dishonorable neglect of duty. It was in this emergency that the lofty disregard of personal security exhibited itself in his decision.[1]

Under all the uncertainties of his position, a brave man might have retired without shame; but a noble and conscientious one always decides on the side of self-sacrifice.

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[1] *Silas Wood's Sketch of the Settlement of Long Island.*

He adopted the course which his own delicate sense of honor and of duty dictated, and resolved not to retreat until he was relieved from his perilous service by absolute orders from the Convention. Unwilling that his command should share his peril, the General ordered his troops, on the morning of the 28th, to take a position about four miles beyond Jamaica, while he returned thither, accompanied only by an orderly or two, to receive the expected message from the Convention. There he awaited its arrival, until late in the afternoon; and then returned slowly to his head-quarters of the day before, only on receipt of the intelligence that the British outposts were being pushed rapidly toward the village.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon before his confidence in the power and intention of Congress to reinforce him was broken, and his high sense of honor permitted him to abandon his post.

He had scarcely quitted the village of Jamaica before the spell which had seemed to hold in check the British advance of light guards was broken, and a squadron of fierce troopers was riding hard in his pursuit. The enemy had been informed, the day before, that a rebel General was holding a position at Jamaica, with considerable force; and they were unwilling to attack, with a detachment of only a few hundreds, what might prove a formidable work, defended by a large body of men. Some of the tories, who swarmed in the neighborhood of Jamaica, had afterward reached the British lines, and informed young Oliver De Lancey of the true position of the American General.

A squadron of the 17th regiment of British dragoons was mounted in haste, and pushed on in his pursuit, accom-

panied by a detachment of the 71st infantry, and guided by loyalists who hoped to be revenged for the loss of their horses and cattle, and to repay the long debt for the insult and harrying to which they had been exposed during the past year. Unchecked by the bursting of one of the fierce thunder-storms which occur so frequently on our sea-coast at that season, De Lancey's troops rode furiously into the village of Jamaica, stopping at the houses indicated by their tory guides to capture such rebel officers as had been quartered in them. Col. Robinson, who had occupied a room in the house of Mrs. Cebra, had but a few minutes before mounted his horse at the door, to accompany Gen. Woodhull; and one Robert Moore, of Newtown, answered their rude summons on its panels. The sanguinary intentions of the troopers toward Col. Robinson, were fully indicated by the savage cruelty which they exhibited toward Mr. Moore; and their undiscriminating fury throws light upon the gloomy incidents which followed. Without questioning his identity, though evidently mistaking him for the Colonel, they hacked at Moore with their sabres, until his hand was nearly cut from his arm.

Mr. Onderdonk obtained much information from the traditions of the neighborhood, and, in some cases, from the persons who were contemporaries of the tragic events we are seeking to elucidate, which throws not a little light upon the obscure history of those events. He says that there is little doubt that the light horse were expressly detached for the purpose of capturing Woodhull and his command, and of securing the great herd of stock which they had collected.

Among the persons whose testimony Mr. Onderdonk secured, was Major William Howard, who, at the great age of eighty-six, retained still the most vivid recollection of the events of the Revolution.

Major Howard said that on the night of the 26th, before the battle, the light horse, who acted as scouts, heard from the tories where Woodhull's party lay, and started with the expectation of effecting its capture. Exaggerated accounts of the number of his force were, however, received so constantly from the country people, that the light horse became alarmed, and soon returned without ever having seen Woodhull or his troops. Others narrate that on the day succeeding the battle, the troop of light horse was again detached upon the same enterprise, and entered Jamaica just as the inhabitants were engaged at their evening meal. The object of their advance was apparent, as they everywhere made inquiries concerning Woodhull's position. They stopped before the house of Robert Hinchman, a well known whig, who, on perceiving their approach, ran out of the back door, but was intercepted in his flight by the soldiers who had already surrounded the dwelling, expecting, doubtless, to find Woodhull quartered there. Mr. Hinchman was seen by his family surrounded by the infuriated soldiery, apparently about to cut him to pieces, while he was upon his knees, with uplifted hands, as if to ward off their blows. Discovering that he was not their intended victim, the captors spared his life, but placed him in confinement that night, and marched him away with the other prisoners the next day.

Discovering that their intended victim had escaped, they pushed on to the eastward in pursuit. The devoted

General, meanwhile, unconscious of the approach of his pursuers, had reached his quarters of the day before, at the inn of Increase Carpenter. This house possesses a historic interest, aside from having been the scene of the massacre which followed. It was within its walls that the first revolutionary gathering on Long Island was held, and that the first resolutions expressive of patriotic sentiments were adopted. A narrow farm-lane ran at right angles to the road, up to the hills, then as now covered with a dense forest, and extending parallel with the main road, from which they were distant about half a mile.

The inn was the ordinary Dutch farm-house, with a hall running through the centre, the back door of which opened upon an enclosure, bounded on one side by the rail-fence along the lane. To one of the fence posts in this lane, or beneath the shed in close proximity, the General secured his horse; apparently with the intention, should a sudden advance of the enemy's pickets be made, of riding unobserved up to the woods on the hills, where, in the gloom of the evening, he would have been safe from pursuit in a few moments. Woodhull had scarcely seated himself, when the dragoons of De Lancey appeared almost at the door, the roar of the thunder and the beating of the torrents of rain having deadened the sound of their horses' hoofs. Every indication is given by his actions that Gen. Woodhull had become aware of his danger, but had resolved to risk everything rather than abandon a position which might be of vital consequence in the plans of the Commander-in-chief. On reaching Carpenter's tavern his first act had been to order Col. Robinson forward, remain-

ing himself, without attendance, in the still lingering hope of receiving some communication from the Congress. But that fatal illusion, born of an excessive confidence in this body, was now rudely dispelled. The shouts of the eager dragoons as they dashed up to the door, led on by the tory Smith, an ostler, who guided them, first warned him of his imminent danger. The General sprang to the rear hall-door, which was secured with one of those ponderous latches whose handle forms part of a huge knocker, and the unfastening of which cost him some precious moments of time. Once in the enclosure, his first effort was to reach his horse in the lane; and it was while in the act of clearing the fence, close to the head of the animal, that he was overtaken by the dismounted dragoons, who had plunged through the hall in pursuit of him. The scene of sickening murder which followed is scarcely paralleled in history, since civilization forbade the slaughter of prisoners as a privilege of the conqueror. The wretched and cowardly officer who first reached the General, has had the rare good fortune to have a strange obscurity thrown over his identity. Capt. De Lancey is admitted to have commanded the troops in person, and has been solemnly charged with the crime of murdering the venerable man, who had surrendered unresistingly to his demand. Silas Wood does not appear to have been aware of Col. Troop's letter; for he attributes the massacre to one Major Baird, of the 71st regiment. The ruffian, whichever of them it was, approached the General with the exclamation, "Surrender, you damned rebel!" Without making a single motion that could be construed into resistance, Woodhull at once tendered him his sword.

Unappeased by this act of submission, the officer, with still uplifted sword, demanded in an infuriated tone, "Say, God save the King!"

The devoted General, undaunted by his violence, only replied in a calm tone of dignity and courage, "God save us all!" "God save the King! Say, God save the King!" shouted the brutal leader, as he aimed the swift blows of his sabre at the defenseless head of the old General. The instinctive raising of his arm at this attack, was but to protect his head and face from the sabre cuts; and it was only when both were frightfully hacked, that he fell to the ground, without uttering other words than of regret that he had surrendered. The sanguinary ruffian would undoubtedly have completed his murderous design, in putting the General to death, had he not been prevented by another officer possessing more honor and humanity.

From the place where he fell Woodhull was removed a few feet, to the foot of a maple tree which grew near the hall door; and there, bleeding nearly to death, he lay until the troops, fearful of being intercepted by some of Woodhull's force, departed in as great haste as they had come.

Gen. Woodhull, the blood still streaming from his wounds, was mounted behind one of the troopers, and hurried back to Jamaica. He was placed in Mrs. Hinchman's tavern; and although Drs. Ogden and Minema of that place waited upon him for the purpose of dressing his wounds, they were refused permission, and a British surgeon was directed to perform that service, which he did with much kindness and skill. The wounds on Wood-

hull's person were ten in number — seven deep gashes on his arm, nearly severing it in more than one place from his body, and three on his head.

The fortitude with which Woodhull met his misfortune exhibits the repose of a mind prepared for all ills, by a consciousness of unblemished honor and fidelity to duty. During the evening, while lying in Hinchman's inn, and in great torture from his wounds, he was visited by Miss Cebra, at whose house he had probably lodged, and on her entrance said: "Madam, I understand you are Mrs. Robinson's sister," and, with his sound hand drawing a silver spoon from his pocket, he said: "Take this, Madam, and hand it back to Mrs. Robinson. She gave it to me some time ago, when I was about to take the field; 'For,' she said, 'I suppose you will not always have conveniences for eating when in camp.'" Miss Cebra carefully preserved the General's hat, and for several years it was kept by his family as an evidence of the fierce blows which were inflicted upon him. His shirt sleeve was observed by the lady to be cut through in seven places. After such of the villagers as were permitted to see him had retired, he said to Mrs. Hinchman, "Don't leave me all night with these men;" to which the hostess replied, "You need not be uneasy about that, General; I shall not sleep this night." At some time during the night, or upon the next morning, he was removed to the old Presbyterian Stone Church, and confined there, with many other whigs who had been dragged from their homes.

On the twenty-ninth, Gen. Woodhull, in company with the rest of the Jamaica prisoners, was removed to the New

VIEW OF NEW UTRECHT CHURCH AND DE SILLE HOUSE,

Used as Prison and Hospital after the Battle.

Utrecht church, which, being a Dutch Presbyterian house of worship, was unceremoniously used as a prison. The inhumanity of his captors was carried to an extraordinary extent in his removal; for at first they insisted upon his walking to New Utrecht, with the other prisoners. Whitehead Hicks, a well-known gentleman of Jamaica, had previously offered the use of his carriage for the conveyance of the wounded General; but the kind offer was rejected, incredible as it may seem, by Sir William Erskine, then in command. Another prisoner, Daniel Lamberson of Jamaica, having been found too ill to walk, the officers compelled him to take his own vehicle, called a chair, and the General was permitted to be conveyed in it.

Mr. Onderdonk, who has been indefatigable in collecting the incidents of Woodhull's capture and death, is of the opinion that the General and the other prisoners were first taken to Howe's headquarters in Brooklyn, for registration, and adds: "We know nothing of the place or manner of his confinement, until about a fortnight after, when he was brought on board a prison-ship at New Utrecht." Among those who were confined with him was the saintly Elder Baylis, whose blindness seemed to have intensified his patriotism and piety. His voice possessed an almost unearthly sweetness, and he often sang in his imprisonment, with the fervor of a martyr, the old songs of faith and triumph, which he knew so well. The dying General must have heard these strains of victory over the pangs of human torture, and echoed back in his soul, accustomed to be conqueror in such trials, all their peans of triumph. That he was communing with his Maker, in whose presence he had no dread of appearing, we can have no

rational doubt. Judge Jones says somewhat scoffingly of him, in his manuscript history of the war, "Woodhull was a rigid Presbyterian."

The frequent change of disposition of their prisoners by the British at this time, indicates the uncertainty with which they viewed their possession of the country they had conquered; for in a day or two an old transport ship, named the Pacific, dropped down to Gravesend, and all the prisoners from New Utrecht and Flatbush were placed on board of her.

The horrors of the prison-ships, a species of awful cruelty which Spanish inquisition never invented, were here first inaugurated. On board the Pacific, officers and men were crowded so densely together, that not all could sleep at the same time; which inconvenience, shared alike by the wounded and the whole, together with the almost total deprivation of food, seemed to warrant the suspicion that the British officers, unwilling to endure the odium of putting them to death by the sword, had determined to effect their destruction by the more silent instrument of starvation.

Two days of this horrible torture, the spectacle of which was too painful for even the inhumanity of the officer in command, were endured; and on the 2d of September, a vessel, described by one of the prisoners as the Snow Mentor, was brought alongside, and the officers transferred to her, apparently as a measure of humanity.

It is painful for us to be compelled to believe, from the overwhelming evidence before us, that this mean craft was selected for a prison with the most malignant intelligence. The vessel had been used for the transportation of cattle

from England, and was, of course, filthy as a stable, with their ordure; although the relief from the horrors of the prison ship Pacific was so great as to be spoken of with gratitude. The wounded and now dying General was laid on the floor of the foul cabin; and, but for the kindness of a subordinate officer, who, shocked at the infliction of all this needless suffering, presented him with his blanket, he would have been stretched upon the bare planks almost naked. The officers who accompanied him could assist him but little, for many of them had been stripped of all their upper clothing by their Hessian captors. We have the evidence of his condition, and of the inhumanity of his captors and jailors, from the testimony of several officers who were his companions on the Snow. One of these officers was Lieut. Robert Troop, of Col. Lasher's battalion of New York Militia; a gentleman whose subsequent bravery in the service raised him to the rank of Colonel, and whose character, through his whole life, entitled his statements to the most implicit credence.[1] Soon after his release, he made, under the solemnity of an oath, a detailed narration of the horrors of the imprisonment on board of the Mentor, which were almost too frightful for contemplation.

The combined horrors of mutilation, exposure, starvation, and imprisonment in the loathsome cattle ship, had now accomplished their work.

It became evident to even the most indifferent of the heartless wretches who surrounded him that the General

[1] Colonel Troop was in after life the personal friend and political associate of Jay and Hamilton, and of stainless honor. *Sabine's Loyalists*, p. 367. See Document 38.

was dying; and, in a momentary impulse of humanity, or from wholesome dread of reprisals in kind from the rebels, he was removed to a house adjacent to the New Utrecht church, where, on the twentieth of September, after the amputation of his wounded arm, he expired.

Yet even while his eyes, glazed with the chill of death, were closing on all earthly scenes, the spectacle of his countrymen, suffering from starvation and wounds, rose before his vision.

With his dying breath he briefly greeted his beloved wife, who had just arrived, and immediately directed that the wants of the American prisoners, then almost perishing from starvation, should be supplied from the provisions brought from his own farm. With these noble words of self-forgetfulness on his lips, the spirit of Nathaniel Woodhull passed away.

FINIS.

Amerika

Plan
des Redoutes et des Lignes que la
et l'Isle du Gouverneur, de la ba
Hudson, et de celui que le Gén
A. le Camp des Ingenieurs
B. les Redoutes et les Lignes d
C. la Partie du Bois abattu.
D. les Redoutes sur Redh. ck
E. le Fort Sterling
F. Une Redoute commencé
G. le Camp que l'Armée anglo
H. le Camp que le General H.
I. les Batteries des Anglais, c
K. Brocklyn
L. Brocklandferry
M. Bedfort

Bedhook

Freedoms Anglais

Chester

Photo-Lithographic

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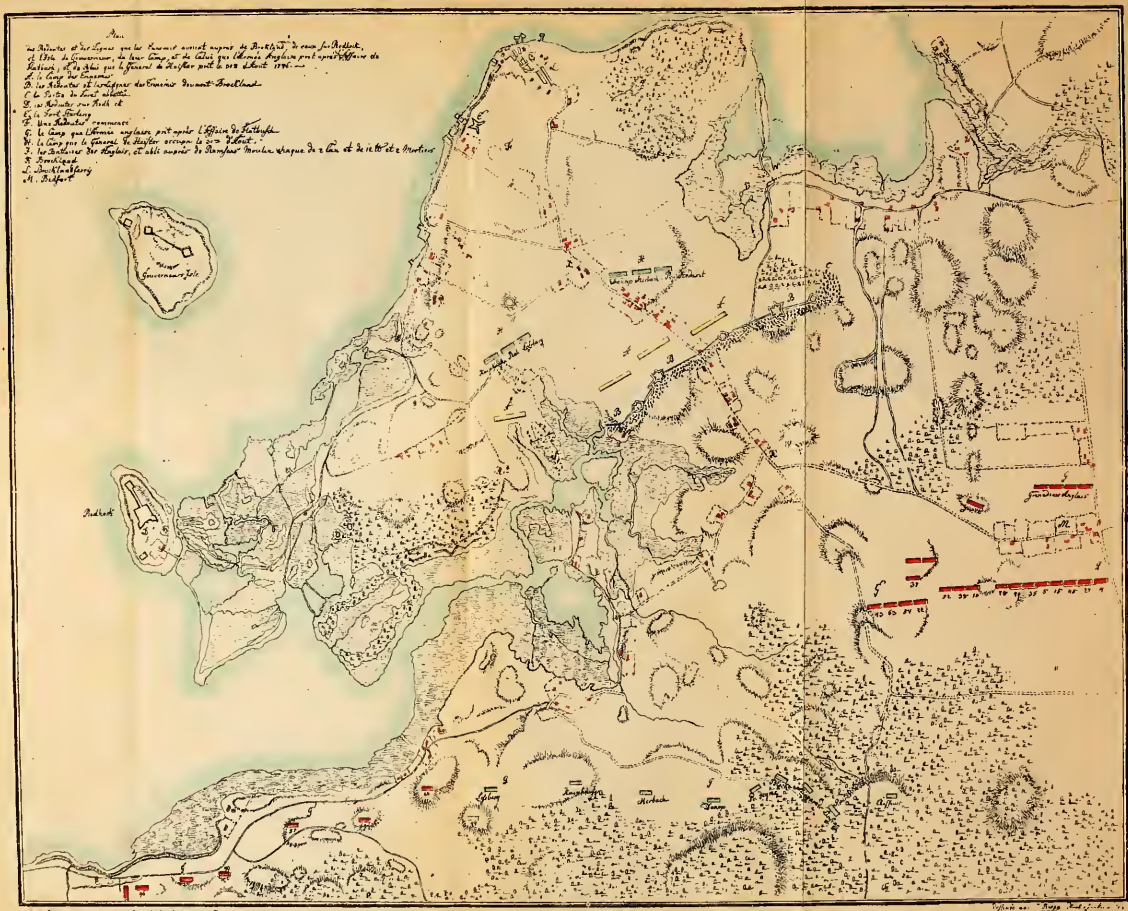
FINIS.

Amerika



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DOCUMENTS

RELATING TO THE

Progress of Revolutionary Measures

ON

LONG ISLAND.

DOCUMENTS.

[No. 1.]

B. G. the Earl of Stirling to Colonel Ward.

"Head Quarters, New York, March 8th, 1776.

"Dear Sir,—I write this letter to you in the utmost confidence of secrecy, and therefore, no man but yourself is to see it. It is absolutely necessary to prevent the communication between the ship Phenix, which lies off the west end of Long Island, below the Narrows, and the people of that part of Long Island; but more especially to take or destroy a certain Frank James, a pilot who now assists Captain Parker, who commands the Phenix, in decoying and taking vessels of great importance to the cause we are now engaged in. There are some other pilots serving Captain P. in the same way, whose names I am not informed of, but they are well known to Mr. Christopher Duyckinck, who with three or four other guides will attend you for the purposes hereinafter mentioned.

"You will pick out of your regiment two of the most alert officers, with two parties of about twenty men each, to be supplied with twenty rounds of ammunition and three days' provisions ready dressed, who, with these guides are to proceed to the places they will show them,—conceal themselves as much as possible from the people of the country,—take such stations as are most proper for

securing or destroying such pilots, or any persons belonging to the man-of-war. It will be best that the two parties march from your quarters to-morrow evening, a little before moon-rising, so that the men may arrive at their stations before daylight; and it will be absolutely necessary that the officer of each party consult with, and put the utmost confidence in the guides assigned to them. When the parties have taken their stations, they should, if possible, without firing, or by any means alarming the man-of-war, or the country, prevent any boats from leaving the shore; and the shortest way to effect this, will be for single men, about daylight, to examine the shore, and with their hatchets cut a hole or two in the bottoms of all the small boats they find there, and to remove to some secret place the oars, paddles, or sails.

"You will see the necessity of this matter being conducted with secrecy and alertness; and I doubt not you will choose your men accordingly.

"I am, &c."

[*Duer's Life of Lord Stirling*, p. 135.]

[No. 2.]

Letter of Gov. Tryon to Lord George Germain, guaranteeing the loyalty of the inhabitants of Long Island.

[The true sentiments of the inhabitants were clearly indicated by the widely different effect of the summons to arms by the Provincial Congress and that issued by the Royal Governor a few weeks after the battle of the 27th.]

My Lord: On the 10th instant I reviewed the Militia of *Queen's* County, at *Hampstead*, when eight hundred and twenty men were mustered; and on *Thursday* following, I saw the *Suffolk* Militia at *Brookhaven*, where near eight

hundred men appeared, to all of whom, as well as to the Militia of *Queen's* County, I had in my presence an oath of allegiance and fidelity administered, the form of which is herewith transmitted.

I took much pains in explaining to the people (having formed them into circles) the iniquitous arts, etc., that had been practised on their credulity, to seduce and mislead them; and I had the satisfaction to observe among them a general return of confidence in Government. A very large majority of the inhabitants of Queen's County have indeed steadfastly maintained their royal principles, as have small districts in *Suffolk* County. Some men from *South* and *Easthampton* townships, who attended the review, assured me, Rebel parties from *Connecticut* were then on the eastermost part of the island, and which prevented in general the settlers in that quarter from attending my summons; but that they are very desirous to live under a peaceable obedience to his Majesty's authority. The enclosed letter from their *Presbyterian* minister will more fully explain their sentiments.

Three companies, I learned, had been raised out of *Suffolk* County for the Rebel army; most of whom, I was made to understand, would quit that service, if they could get home.

I have the pleasure to assure your Lordship, through the whole of this tour I did not hear the least murmur of discontent, but a general satisfaction expressed at my coming among them; and to judge from the temper and disposition I perceived in them, there is not the least apprehension of any further commotions from the inhabitants on *Long-Island;* all are industrious in bringing to market what provisions the island affords.

* * * * * * *

While on *Long-Island*, I gave certificates to near three hundred men, who signed the Declaration prescribed by

the King's Commissioners' Proclamation of the 30th *November* last. Large bodies of the people have already taken the benefit of the grace therein offered them.

[*Force's Am. Archives*, vol. III, 1776, folio 1404.]

[No. 3.]

General Greene to General Washington.

[Col. Edmund Fanning enlisted the greater part of his corps from Long Island of which he was a native. His infamous career of debauchery and extortion in North Carolina, and the terrible punishments inflicted upon him by an outraged people, form a chapter of no small interest in its history. The character of the loyalist recruits, as given by Gen. Greene, was not such as to make them greatly feared. While in command on Long Island, the General writes respecting some of its tories who had been arrested:]

Saturday, twelve o'clock, July 27, 1776.

Dear Sir: I have examined the prisoners, and find them to be a parcel of poor, ignorant, cowardly fellows. Two are tailors, and the other two are common labourers. They candidly confess they set off with an intention of going to *Staten-Island*, but not with any intention of joining the enemy, but to get out of the way of fighting here. I believe the true reasons of their attempting to make their escape were, there has been a draught amongst the Militia to fill the new levies, and it was rumored these were a part that were drawn. It was also reported they were to go into the Northern Army, and that almost all that went there died, or were killed. The prospect was so shocking to them and to their grandmothers and aunts,

I believe they persuaded them to run away. Never did I see fellows more frightened; they wept like a parcel of children, and appear exceedingly sorrowful. . . . I beg your Excellency's direction how to dispose of them; they don't appear to be acquainted with one publick matter; they have been Toryish, but I fancy not from principle, but from its being the prevailing sentiment of the County. . . .

I have the honor to be, your obedient servant,

NATH. GREENE.

[*Force, Archives*, 5th series, vol. I, pp. 621, 622.]

Letter from Benjamin Sands, Chairman of the Committee of Safety for Great Neck, to the Provincial Congress of New York, in reply to the circular soliciting evidence against nineteen residents of Queens County, carried prisoners to Philadelphia, and sent back to New York for trial.

District of Great Neck, Cow Neck, &c.,
March 9, '76.

SIR: The committee have received a letter from your honorable body, of the 15th of February, and as far as lay in their power, complied with its contents.

"But surely [you will say] you could have collected more proof than all this?" The answer is ready. Their meetings were confined to their own party, their conclusions kept as secret as possible, added to our living in a remote part of the county, rendered our abilities unequal to the task.

We are, however, able to give an imperfect account of our own district, wherein lives but one of the proscribed. And as this great man has been supposed by many the main-spring in keeping up the divisions in this county, it

may be a sufficient excuse for our being tedious on this head.

We shall therefore, with the utmost humility, proceed to put our scattered materials in order, for the consideration of your honorable body.

Soon after this gentleman left the General Assembly, he appears in the light of a disperser of the "Queens County Freeholder."[1] The design of this paper is glaring on its whole surface.

He next appears the author of the Hempstead resolves;[2] and as the Queens County Freeholder levelled its whole force at the very essence of a Continental Congress, so these resolves struck at the total overthrow of Provincial ones.

Soon after the Battle of Lexington, this gentleman roundly avows that the Bostonians fired first on the King's troops,[3] and that more of the Bostonians were killed than of the Regulars; but as the public prints gave the lie to this proposition, it became necessary to erect a new battery.

Hence he asserts the newspapers are lies.[4] He had, he said, private information that might be depended upon. But this having no other foundation than his own assertions, the means were unequal to the end. Here, with an air of importance equal to its absurdity, [he] asserts, "Capt. McDougal says 'it is necessary to print untruths' to keep up the spirits of the people,[5] and Capt. St. Thorne [says he] is my author, who heard him say so."

The populace took fire like hasty combustibles, and although Capt. Thorne denied the essential part of the charge, yet it was impossible fully to prevent its effects.

Soon after the order of the respectable committee of safety for collecting some arms in Queens county (see 36), this gentleman attacks the right, and openly[6] declared that they were an unconstitutional body, who had no legal

existence, and that he was determined to resist the order; but had it been the Continental Congress [he said] he would have submitted publicly, for he did not deny their authority, but spoke respectfully of them.

"But what [said he] is to be done for our friends in Boston — the friends to order and good government — and loyal soldiery, that are supporting the rights of the States and the very being of the constitution, who are starving by means of a restrictory Act?" "Why, this," says he, "I'll do —"

"I'll charter Capt. Thorne's sloop[7] and send them provisions," notwithstanding an order of the honorable Congress to the contrary.

Mark the gradual steps of this gentleman to something of more alarming dye: for things were no sooner ripe, than he attacks the honorable Continental Congress itself; hence[8] he has openly asserted he knew no such s[elf constituted au]thority, and declared they were in c[onsequence unconstituti]onal.

Not content with dispersing a scandalous libel; fabricating seditious resolves; declaring our bleeding friends in Boston the aggressors; alarming opposition by our great loss; discountenancing our public prints; defaming our respectable committee of safety; denying the authority of our honorable Continental Congress; but [he] begins an open attack on our grand resource, the continental currency, also.

Hence he asserts, "I take no continental currency[9] unless for a bad debt:" and getting one of these bills on this ground, expressed his uneasiness to pay it away as soon as possible. "But we see [you'll say] no accounts of the formation of committees who protested against your spring and fall county meetings for deputies. We see no proof of the meeting previous to their getting powder from the Asia, nor any of the proscribed being concerned in

that affair." Very true; for this proof is not in our power. "Why, you might have cited some of their second rate leaders, and by that means got proof to your satisfaction." What effects the solemnity of your honorable body might have on them, we do not pretend to determine; but we have tried the experiment in our own little sphere, and found it entirely in vain. We fear you are tired through this long detail.

So con [scious of the importance of the subject, we are] determined to persevere [in the discharge of our duties.]

We are, sir,

Your very humble servants.

Signed by order,

BENJ. SANDS, Chairman.

[1] Witness — Dan'l Whitehead Kissam, of Cow Neck.
[2] Witness — John Burtis, tanner, of Cow Neck.
[3] Witness — Henry Stocker, Capt. Richard Thorne, of Great Neck.
[4] Witness — Obadiah Demilt, of Cow Neck.
[5] Witness — Ann Rapelje, of Cow Neck.
[6] Witness — John Burtis, tanner.
[7] Witness — Caleb Cornwell, Cow Neck.
[8] Witness — Rich'd Thorne, Capt. Thomas Williams, North Side.
[9] Witness — Henry Stocker, Great Neck; Thomas Williams, North Side.

[*Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents of Queens Co.*, p. 48.]

P.S. We have cited —— ——, Esq., an inactive Whig, for interrogation, who evaded attendance on pretence of business. We suspect him too good an evidence to escape your notice, as well as to convince him that all business must bend to the preservation of his country.

To Col. Nath'l Woodhull,

President of the Hon. Provincial Congress.

[No. 4.]

[On the 21st of May, Washington, then about to proceed to Philadelphia, addressed a letter of instructions to Gen. Putnam regarding the loyalists on Long Island, which evinces his anxiety.]

Instructions.

To Maj. General Putnam,

Sir: I have reason to believe, that the Provincial Congress of this colony [New York] have in contemplation a scheme for seizing the principal Tories and disaffected persons on Long Island, in this city, and the country round about; and that, to carry the scheme into execution, they will have recourse to the military power for assistance. If this should be the case, you are hereby required during my absence to afford every aid, which the said Congress, or their Secret Committee shall apply for. I need not recommend secrecy to you, as the success you must be assured, will depend absolutely upon precaution, and the despatch with which the measure, when once adopted, shall be executed.

General Greene will, though not in person perhaps, have a principal share in ordering the detachments from his brigade on Long Island; of course he will be a proper person to be let into the whole plan. I would, therefore, when application is made by Congress, have you and him concert measures with such gentlemen, as that body shall please to appoint, and order the execution with as much secrecy and despatch as possible, and at the same time with the utmost decency and good order. Given under

my hand at Head-Quarters, in the city of New York, this 21st day of May, 1776.

[*Sparks's Letters of Washington*, vol. III, p. 397.]

[No. 5.]

Letter from Benjamin Birdsall, at New Haven.

New Haven, Nov. 25th, 1776.

GENTLEMEN — I think myself bound in duty to let you know the several transactions past, and the present unhappy situation I am now laboring under in the unnatural contest between Great Britain and America. In the first of the disputes, for a just cause, I took the part of America, and continued it for a long time, through many dangerous and difficult contests, against my friends, relations and almost all sects and ranks of denominations, in particular in my own county. I was appointed one of the county committee, and from that a lieutenant-colonel in the second battalion in our county; and while in the service of the committee, it took nearly all my time in service with the committee and attending the different companies, with many adjournments to choose their officers for the militia, I being appointed as a sub-committee for that purpose, and continued it until the whole districts were divided and the officers chosen; and was, by the request of the inhabitants, 8 or 10 days with a petition from the inhabitants to the Convention at the White Plains, concerning the removing the stock from the island. In all which time I bore my own expenses and received nothing for any of the service. And as for the service of a colonel — myself and two more officers were appointed and ordered by the county committee to secure all the

boats on the south side, from Rockaway to Huntingtown line, which is 18 miles distance; 7 miles distance I collected all the boats together and secured them by a sentry, 106 in number; and if the other 11 miles distance had been as well secured, by collecting the boats together and a guard kept over them, it would have cut off the communication between our south and the man of war, and saved 100 and odd hay boats that the tories carried off to the Ministerial fleet and sold them for their service. Well, when the quarter draft from the militia upon Long island was made out, Suffolk county had the commanding officer of the regiment, Colonel Smith, in his full rank with full pay. Now, if I know anything about the arrangement of officers, the next in command ought to have been a lieutenant-colonel out of one of the 3 regiments of Kings County, or the 1st or 2d in Queens; but the 1st, Colonel John Sands, was appointed, and must take the rank and pay of lieutenant-colonel, and the 2nd major of Colonel Rampson's regiment, in his full rank and pay, and Benjamin Birdsall, a Lieutenant-colonel, to take rank and pay with the captains, under command of a 2d major. The arrangement of the officers in Colonel Smith's regiment appears to me as remarkable almost as the conduct was bad in the field officers in breaking up the regiment in the manner which they did. This appointment of Colonel Smith's regiment was noticed by some certain field officers who had been up to Hampstead, and being acquainted with me, I was fixed upon, some few days before the King's troops landed upon Long island, to go through with a number of men on the south side from Rockaway to Huntingtown, 18 miles distance, to destroy or secure all the boats and bring in all the fat cattle in the lines to General Greene, and after, in his absence, General Sullivan; which I executed without favor or affection (and among my neighbors and relations), until the King's

troops landed upon Long island; and then I was obliged to press 6 wagons and 12 horses, among my nearest neighbors, to carry down the baggage of about 200 of our troops, who were sent for by express by General Sullivan to march within the lines; and as soon as we got within the lines, I was sent by General Sullivan immediately up about 30 miles with a small party of men, after 70 odd fat cattle that we had left collected together; I went, and brought the cattle safely in around the north side of the island, Monday night, and Tuesday morning, before day, the engagement began, when I took my post upon the lines, and continued till Thursday afternoon; and Friday morning, sun about an hour high, by General Putnam's orders, I went over to Long island with 6 boats, to fetch a number of horses and other things, until the regulars came down, fired four shot upon 2 of the boats, a little behind; and from that I brought up the rear of Colonel Smith's regiment, (sick men from New York, without money,) who would have been left had it not been for me; which I hope may be made manifest in your presence, the 3 field officers and myself face to face before you, which may right many other transactions, that ought not to be left in darkness. I am now joined in Colonel Livingston's regiment, where are about 68 of Colonel Smith's men. I have left a wife and 6 children upon Long island, and all I have is under the command of the King's troops; it is not in my power to relieve them. I set out, with heart and hand, to risk my life in defence of our cause, and am still willing to do it; the continuance of the war is promising so fair, that I will now offer myself at your service to engage in it so long as the war may continue; place me in my rank, give me a chance to execute my conduct, and I doubt not but it may be said, there is one man upon Long island, and in Queens county, has taken up the cause of his country from the first, and has con-

tinued in it firm and steadfast to the last, for the support and protection of his family and to the honour and welfare of his country. I have taken up considerable time, though with pleasure; I cannot satisfy myself in letting you know enough. I have this to consider — I am here upon the main shore, and at present at a loss; am I under pay that will support me, or am I not? If I am not under pay, it is time for me to look out; well, I must go to work to provide my victuals and clothes; well, I shall labor discontented; work every day for low wages; my family is near to me; I am afraid they fare bad; a wife and children are hard to part with; well, I attempt to go to see them; I am taken up, confined and perhaps sent away or massacred; well, what station of life am I in? if I am engaged in the cause, my mind is fixed; I know what I have to do, and I know my subsistence; I am content; my mind is bent to promote the cause wherein I am engaged. But if a man's income is extraordinary high, or too low to moderately maintain him, it will too much draw his mind and attention from the business he is engaged in.

I have wrote a long translation, which I make bold should come to your knowledge. I write but seldom; excuse me if I have in any part occasioned any insult upon your Honours; it is not what I mean to do; but you are the guardians of our rights, and to you alone, I have to make my address. I wish you well, and that a perfect union amongst you may be and continue to the honour and welfare of America, and that you may appoint such men in our State, to lead and command, who will ever dispute and defend the American ground, inch by inch, over and over again, until a final defensive war may end, and remain to us all well, and for evermore continue.

From your humble servant,

BENJAMIN BIRDSALL.

To the Honourable Convention of the State of New York.

[*Journal of the New York Provincial Congress*, vol. II, p. 334.]

[No. 6.]

[Even the whig descendants of the Puritans of Suffolk county were vexed by the persistent loyalty of many of their neighbors, as appears from several letters of complaint to Congress. One of these is as follows:]

A letter from Wm. Smith, Esq., Suffolk county, informing that tories go from that quarter to the ships of war, with water, oysters and clams.

Man. St. George's, May 25th, 1776.

GENTLEMEN — The committee of Brookhaven, manor of St. George, and patent ship of Meritches, met the 23d instant. A number of evidences being sworn, it appeared manifest to the meeting that there was a communication from Winthrop's patent and the ships of war lying at the Hook. It appeared also, one Gyer, a skipper, had carried off a number of men, eight or ten, last Saturday night, the most of them from Connecticut or Westchester, who had been skulking in the woods a considerable time before they went off. There is missing from that patent at least three or four persons who are supposed to be gone with them, in particular one Fountain, a gunsmith. Gyer has been several trips out at the inlet, and when returned gave no satisfactory account to those who asked him where he had been; and it is thought he has carried people to the man of war before, as people has come from the main shore to Stonybrook, and then gone through the woods to Winthrop's patent. Men have been seen with arms who were unknown to the inhabitants, and has given so great uneasiness to the people, that they have called on the minute men and militia for assistance. There has been 15 minute men stationed there since last Monday. It is suspected

besides men, they get from that quarter water, oysters and clams, which are there in the greatest plenty. As the minute-men are such persons who are a carrying on business in the farming way, and cannot leave home without almost, if not quite ruining themselves and families, I was ordered by a letter to lay the affair before the Congress, not doubting, if they thought proper they would report the same to the Commander-in-Chief; it was thought by the Committee that a small armed vessel, stationed at or near the inlet (where the sounding is, as I am informed from 8 to 12 feet), would answer the purpose best. People in these parts are much alarmed, especially since we now know that they have on board the men of war, those who are thoroughly acquainted with the navigation of the South bay. Pray let us hear from you soon. This committee has collected between 40 and 50 guns for the use of troops, which are much better than I could expect, and will be soon repaired. The greatest sticklers for ministerial measures, step towards Continental as fast as could be expected in this quarter.

Gentlemen, I am, with the greatest respect,

Your very humble servt.

WM. SMITH.

To the Provincial Congress, now sitting in New York.

[*Journal of the New York Provincial Congress*, vol. II, p. 110.]

[No. 7.]

Examination of John Hendrickson regarding the conspiracy of the Tories of Long Island.

Die Lunæ, 9 H. O. A. M. May 20th, 1776.

The Congress met pursuant to adjournment.

John Hendrickson attending, agreeable to the request of yesterday, the following oath was administered to him:

"I, John Hendrickson, do solemnly swear, on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, that the evidence that I shall give to this Congress shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and that I will keep secret my examination before this Congress, until leave shall be given by order of this Congress to reveal the same."

The President by order of Congress, assured Mr. Hendrickson that his name, and the substance of the evidence which he shall give, shall, for the present, be kept secret.

John Hendrickson, being examined on oath, says, that he does not know of any private plot among the disaffected on Long Island; that he has observed the people of Hempstead in high spirits of late; that the general part of the inhabitants of Hempstead and Rockaway are against the measures of the Colonies, and in favor of the King; that about a fortnight ago there was a report that a fleet was expected to arrive; that they appeared rejoiced at it; that they expected to reap a benefit from the arrival of a fleet; that some of them say, they expect to join the King's troops if they arrive. That Richard Hulett and Thomas Cornell were esteemed leading men of those disaffected in Hempstead and Rockaway; that Stephen Hulett was also esteemed a man of influence among them, and active. That Richard Hulett and Thos. Cornell are absent. That Isaac Denton, near Rockaway, is thought to be active at present, and to assist in sending provisions to the ships of war; that Isaac Denton has a sloop of his own, and that he, the examinant, has heard that the said Isaac Denton has put provisions on board; that he has lately heard James Smith, of Hempstead, say he would join the King's troops if they should arrive; that people come to Hempstead from other places, who are said to come there for refuge; that he has not lately seen many strangers going there, but that in January and February last he has seen

many persons, sometimes a number in a day, who were strangers, going to Hempstead; that they appeared to be reserved and cautious; that he has lately seen some strangers in the county who are not residents; that he believes several of the inhabitants are yet armed; that he has lately been informed that along the south side, among the gunners, every other man at least is armed; that he lately saw two or three men like private men, who, he supposed, belonged to one of the ships of war; that they appeared like sailors; that from his general acquaintance, it is his opinion, that most part of the inhabitants would oppose the liberties of America if British troops should arrive; that there are yet some arms in and about the town of Hempsted; that the inhabitants are 500 or 600 in number; that he has heard the inhabitants speak of Gabriel Ludlow, Justice Clowes, Daniel Kissam, Esq^{r}. and Isaac Smith, Esq^{r}., as principal men, but that he has not heard any of those gentlemen say anything disaffected to the Colonies, and has not had conversation with them on the subject of the present troubles; that last winter a number of the inhabitants met two or three different times at the house of George Ryerson; that there were 30 or 40 men at each of those meetings, as he imagines; that he has seen David Colden, Cap^{t}. Whitehead, Doct. Arden, Thos. Cornel, Captain Richard Hulett and Isaac Smith, go there; that Captain Hicks, at Rockaway, who formerly had a commission from government, had about 140 men in his company; that he conceives many concealed their best arms when Colo. Herd came to disarm them; that they sometimes go out gunning and shooting, but complain for want of ammunition; that the few friends to liberty in that part of the country, are afraid, on account of the openness and threats of the disaffected; that Nathan Smith told the examinant that one Ackerman had informed him that he, the said Ackerman, had seen

a quantity of beef and pork on board of Isaac Denton's sloop, that there were also butter, eggs and gammons on board, and that the sloop proceeded out of Rockaway inlet towards the ships of war; that this was a few days before Capt. Parr came up there with a company of riflemen; that he has at three different times seen one sloop come into Rockaway inlet; that at one time it was Denton's sloop which he saw, and that the last he saw was a light sloop which came there on a Friday, which was a fortnight ago last Friday; that from the caution the greatest part of the inhabitants observe with the few friends to liberty, it is very difficult to obtain a knowledge of their intentions or designs; that he was informed, that lately, at a vendue at Rockaway, one Jacob Foster, who had a cockade in his hat, was much abused and ill treated because he was a whig; that the cockade was taken out of his hat and trod on by one Joseph Beagle; that he also heard that Jacob Hendrickson was abused and his hair pulled, because he was a whig; that he, the examinant, while he was at that vendue, and before he left it, saw Joseph Langdon there; that he appeared to be disaffected and active among the people; that at a sheep parting lately in Hempstead, there was fresh lime punch plenty to be sold, and that it was sold in the pens by Timothy Clowes, a tavernkeeper.

"JOHN HENDRICKSON."

[*Journal of Provincial Congress*, vol. I, p. 454.]

[No. 7 A.]

Plan of the Attack formed by the British Spy, Sergeant Graham.

Gilbert Forbes, being again examined, further saith: That he knew one——Silk; that he was left by Captain *Aidey*

to wait upon his wife, who lives on *Long Island*, somewhere near *Hempstead;* that he is often in town, frequently at *Mrs. Oiry's* and *Mrs. Brandon's*, has the air of a soldier, wears a short brown hunting coat and a double-breasted jacket of the same colour; that he used to wait on a *Mr. Miller*, who lives or lodges in *Mrs. Gouverneur's* house on *Rotten Row;* that Sergeant *Graham* (an old soldier, discharged from the Royal Artillery) was employed by Governour *Tryon* to speak to examinant about inlisting men for the King's service, and told this examinant, from the Governour, that if this examinant exerted himself in that business and raised a number of men, he should have a company; that the said Sergeant also informed him that, at the request of the Governour, he had surveyed the ground and works about this city and on *Long Island*, in consequence of which he had concerted a plan for an attack, which he had given to Governour *Tryon*, and which the Governour approved, which was as follows, viz: that the man-of-war should cannonade the battery at *Red Hook*, and while that was doing a detachment of the army with some cannon, &c., should land below or about *Red Hook*, and march round so as to come upon the back of the batteries near *Swedeland* House, that a small part of the detachment should make a feint of marching up the road leading directly to the battery, but that the main body were to make a circuitous march so as to reach the battery while our attention was engaged by the feint aforesaid; that if they carried that battery, which they expected to take by storm, they were immediately to attack the battery on the hill near the ferry, which the Sergeant said would be easily done, as no embrasures were made, or cannon fixed on the back side of it; that this latter battery, when in their possession, would command the works on *Governour's Island*, which they would keep between two fires, viz: the battery last mentioned on the one side, and the shipping

on the other; that then the shipping, with the remainder of the Army, were to divide, one division was to run up the *North River* and land at or about near *Clarke's* farm, and march directly to *Enclenbergh Hall*, and fortify there; the other division was to run up the *East River* and land in such manner as to gain a footing on *Jones' Hill*, from whence they expected to command and silence the battery on *Bayard's Hill;* that should they gain possession of the places above mentioned, their next object would be the grounds adjacent to *King's Bridge*, where they intend to erect strong works, so as to cut off the communication between the city and country.

[*American Archives*, vol. VI, 4th Series, folio, 1178.]

[No. 8.]

General Howe to Lord George Germaine.

Staten Island, July 7, 1776.

My Lord The *Mercury* packet is despatched to inform your Lordship of the arrival of the *Halifax* fleet, on the 29th of June, at *Sandy Hook*, where I arrived four days sooner in the *Grayhound* frigate. I met with Governour *Tryon*, on board of ship at the Hook, and many gentlemen, fast friends to Government, attending him, from whom I have had the fullest information of the state of the Rebels, who are numerous, and very advantageously posted, with strong intrenchments, both upon *Long-Island* and that of New York, with more that one hundred pieces of cannon for the defense of the town towards the sea, and to obstruct the passage of the fleet up the *North River*, besides a considerable field-train of artillery. Having made inquiries of these gentlemen respecting the face of the coun-

try between *Gravesend Bay* in *Long-Island*, and the enemy's works in the neighbourhood of Brooklyn, their accounts were so satisfactory that I had determined to disembark the Army at *Gravesend;* and with this intention the fleet moved up to the bay, on the 1st instant, in the evening, in order to land the troops at the break of day next morning; but being more particularly informed during the night of a strong pass upon a ridge of craggy heights covered with wood, that lay in the route the Army must have taken, only two miles distant from the front of the enemy's encampment and seven from *Gravesend*, which the Rebels would undoubtedly have occupied before the Kings troops could get up to it; and from the minutest description, judging an attack upon this post, so strong by nature, and so near the front of the enemy's works, to be too hazardous an attempt, before the arrival of the troops with Commodore *Hotham*, daily expected, I declined the undertaking, and passing the *Narrows* with three ships of war and the first division of transports, landed the Grenadiers and Light-Infantry as the ships came up, to the great joy of a most loyal people, long suffering on that account under the oppression of the Rebels stationed among them, who precipitately fled on the approach of the shipping. The remainder of the troops landed the next day and night, and are now distributed in cantonments, where they have the best refreshments.

* * * I propose waiting here for the *English* fleet, or the arrival of Lieutenant-General *Clinton*, in readiness to proceed, unless by some unexpected change of circumstances in the meantime, it should be found expedient to act with the present force. * * *

[*American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, p. 105.]

[No. 8 A.]

Information respecting Dr. Arden and others (tories) at Jamaica.

Doctor *Charles Arden*, was the person who instigated the Tories to sign against having a Congress or a Committee.

Benjamin Smith (son of *Samuel Smith*, Esq.)

Robert Hinchman.

Thomas Smith, (son of *Thomas Smith*,) whom he threatened to hang if he would not sign a paper.

Isaac Leffertse. Bought the widow *Bett's* farm. He wrote the affidavit of *Roeloff Duryee* about Parson Kettletas, and carried Justice *French* to *Duryee's* for that purpose.

Captain *Benjamin Whitehead*, late Supervisor. Repeatedly refused to communicate to the town of Jamaica certain letters from the General Committee of *New-York*, requesting the town to be called together to elect members of a Committee or Congress. Witness: *Waters Smith*, or either of the other persons above named, or Captain *Jacob Wright.*

Alexander Wallace. Resides at *Jamaica*, in *Wat Smith's* house.

———*Bethune.* He maintains an intimacy with *Benjamin Whitehead* and with Dr. *Arden.*

———*Martin*, from *Antigua.* Dwells at *Obd. Mill's* house, opposite the Meeting-House, at a high rent. He associates chiefly with *James Depeyster.*

Charles McEvers. Resides in *John Troop's* house.

Thomas Colgan and *Flemming Colgan* frequently go to *Creed's Hill* to look out; the two *Dunbars*, *John William Livingston*, Jun., and one of the Colgans, were there lately looking out for a fleet. That the *Dunbars* shut themselves up, and refused to train or pay their fines.

John and *William Dunbar.*

George Folliot. Lives with *Jacques Johnson* at *Fresh Meadows*, about one-and-a-half mile from *Jamaica.*

Theophilact Bache, of *Flatbush.* Comes to *Jamaica* to *Alexander Wallace's.*

James Depeyster. Lives next to *William Belt's.* His son, *Joseph Depeyster* has been pursued several times, but cannot be taken. He is said to be a dangerous Tory.

[*Force's American Archives*, vol. VI, 1776, folio 1158.]

[No. 9.]

Imprisonment of the Loyalists of Long Island.

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS TO GENERAL WASHINGTON. In Committee of the Convention of Representatives of the State of New York, at the City Hall of the city of New York, July 14, 1776.

SIR: I am directed by the Committee to inform your Excellency that a great number of the persons now confined in our jail are from *Queens* County, on *Long Island*, and, from all appearances, we are confident they are in sentiment inimical to that glorious cause in which, with your Excellency, we have the honor to be engaged. We have it in our power to confine them close prisoners, or take security for their future conduct. The inconvenience of crowding the jails throughout the County with people of this character, if they can safely be permitted to continue at their usual places of residence, is striking, as it must fill their minds with the sourness of opposition, and at the same trial, by rousing and engaging all their connections, and giving a just alarm to every person suspected of holding similar principles, raise up numerous enemies actuated by revenge and despair. If, on the other hand, security is taken for their peaceable demeanor, at the same time

binding them to continue at their usual places of abode, the dangers I have just suggested to your Excellency will indeed be removed; but another cause of serious apprehension will still remain, and we shall risk much from their correspondence with the enemy, while perhaps it may be difficult to prevent them from knowing the measures which may be taken by your Excellency for the publick service. In this disagreeable dilemma, we find ourselves under the necessity of asking advice, sir, from you, and such persons in your council as you may think proper to consult, it being our wish that our conduct should conform to the sentiments of those who are intrusted with the important concerns of the *United States*. * * * *

GOUV. MORRIS.

[*Force's American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th series, folio 334.]

[No. 10.]

Report to the President to Congress; on driving off Stock.

SIR:—I have been some days, and am still, in the execution of the order of Congress for removing the cattle, horses and sheep in this county, and expect to finish in a day or two more. From the best computation that can be made, there are not less than 7,000 horned cattle, 7,000 sheep and 1000 horses in this county, comprehended in the above order, and to be removed in pursuance of it. A number so large, it is conceived, cannot possibly live long where they are to be driven. On the Bushy Plains they will be entirely destitute of water, besides having other very scanty means of subsistence.

By attending myself on this business, I have had an opportunity of knowing the extreme distress by which the rigid execution of this order must expose many people with their families; so that some among the poorer sort, for

aught I know, must be left to starve. The cattle which many people have turned off to fat for the use of their families, will be lost as to all the purposes of such provision, and their families be destitute of that necessary supply for winter. In several parts of the county there was last year a distemper among the horses, which swept off such numbers of them that many people have been obliged since to depend entirely upon oxen. These being now taken away, they are deprived of the only means they had of carrying on any labor upon their farms, that requires a team of horses or oxen. The consequence of which must be, that they can neither secure their present harvest, nor till the earth for a future one.

I find the people in general are willing to enter into obligations, that (in case of immediate danger) they will drive their stock to any place of greater safety on the island, pursuant to the direction of the Congress or county committee. And considering the danger there is, under the present regulation of losing a great part of the stock for want of sustenance, and the hardships to which people are reduced, I thought it might not be amiss, to mention this circumstance, supposing that the Congress, in concurrence with the General, might perhaps, fall on some method, in this way, for securing this stock on an emergency.

The difficulty of keeping the stock within the limits prescribed, will be so great that I doubt it will be out of my power to effect it. A considerable number of men will be necessary for the purpose—more than I can possibly keep on that duty, when harvest is so near at hand. In short I do not see but that for the present at least, I shall be obliged to leave them to take their chance.

I, am, sir, your very humble servant.

BENJ. KISSAM.

Cow Neck, July, 1776.

[*Onderdonk's Rev. Incidents Queens Co.*, p. 76.]

[No. 11.]

Jeromus Remsen, to Col. John Sands.

New York, July 3, 1776.

To Col. John Sands, Esq.:

Sir: I have this day waited upon his Excellency, Gen. Washington, relating to removing the cattle, horses and sheep on the south side of Queens county, according to the resolve of Congress and the general officers of the army. His opinion is that the commanding officers and committees of the county, order it immediately done. He farther declared that in case the Tories made any resistance, he would send a number of his men with orders to shoot all the creatures, and also those who hindered the execution of said resolve, within the limits therein prescribed. The Commissary of the army engaged to me that he would pay the full value for the fat cattle and sheep to the owners, provided they would drive them within Gen. Greene's lines, in Brookland. Proper care will be taken as to valuing said creatures. Time will not permit us to make any delay.

I am sir, your very humble servant,

Jeromus Remsen, Jr.

[*Onderdonk's Rev. Incidents Queens Co.*, p. 74.]

[No. 12.]

Captain Lambert Suydam's Report of Loyalist Prisoners.

Camp, Long Island, Aug. 19, 1776.

I, the subscriber, went down to Rockaway just at daybreak, with my company of Light Horse, pursuant to an

order from Brig. Gen. Heard, to take care of some boats. At the house of——Van Brockle, I discovered a number of men, issue out of the door and run, some of them partly dressed, and some in their shirts only. Immediately I ordered my men to pursue them, and presently overtook three of their number, and took them prisoners. Two of them got to the woods and hid under the bushes; on finding them, I ordered them to surrender. One of them did; the other absolutely refused, although one of my men had his gun presented to his breast; on which my men alighted and took him.

After I had taken six prisoners, I examined the beach, and found a boat and four oars, and a paddle. In the boat were three sheep, four ducks, and a large bottle with water.

LAMBERT SUYDAM, *Captain of the Troop.*

[*Onderdonk's Rev. Incidents Queens Co.*, p. 86.]

[No. 13.]

A Roll of the Commissioned Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Privates, of the Troop of Horse of King's County, which were upon Duty in order to drive off the Stock. Commenced August 14, 1776.

Upon duty and came over from Long Island.	*Upon duty, but remained upon Long Island.*
Daniel Rappelye, 1st Lieutenant.	Lambert Suydam, Captain.
Jacob Bloom, 2d do.	Peter Wyckoff, Quartermaster.
Peter Vandervoot, Ensign.	Hendrick Suydam, Clerk.
Hendrick Johnson, Sergeant.	John Nostrant, do.

John Blanco, Trumpeter.
Reyner Suydam, Private.
John Vanderveer, do.
Jacob Suydam, Private.
Isaac Snediker, do.
Isaac Boerum, do.
John Rierson, do.
Rutgers Van Brunt, do.
Charles De Bevort, do.
Benjamin Seaman, do.
Roelof Turhume, do.
Andrew Casper, do.
Thomas Betts, do.
Martin Kershaw, do.
Peter Miller, do.
Hendrick Wyckoff, do.

DANIEL RAPPELYE, *Lieutenant.*

A Roll of Commissioned Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Privates, of the Troop of Light Horse of Queen's County, which were upon duty in order to drive off the Stock. Commenced, August 14, 1776.

Upon duty, and came over from off Long Island.

William Boerum, 1st Lieutenant.
Jacob Sebring, Ensign.
Isaac Sebring, Private.
Joseph Sebring, do.
John Hicks, do.
George Powels, do.
William Ellsworth, do.
Jeremiah Brower, do.
James Casper, do.
William Boerum, do.
Adolphus Brower, do.

Upon duty, but remained upon Long Island.

Thomas Everit, 2d Lieutenant.
Joseph Smith, Private.
William Everit, do.
Abraham Rappelye, do.
Stephen Schenck, do.
Robert Galbreath, do.
Samuel Etherington, do.
Nicholas Van Dam, do.

WILLIAM BOERUM, *Lieutenant.*

[*Force's American Archives,* vol. I, 5th Series, folio 953.]

[No. 14.]

Depositions and Letters relating to the Loyalists of Long Island.

COMMITTEE CHAMBER,
White Plains, 12th July, 1776.

Mr.—— being duly sworn on the Holy Evangelist of Almighty God, deposeth and says: That some time after William Sutton returned home from Governor Tryon's ship, he (this deponent) was informed by said Sutton as follows: That our people were to be cut off from New-York, and that the King's troops were to land about ten miles from Mamaroneck; that Hudson's river was to be occupied by them; that the fleet was to be drawn up in a line before New-York, with intent to keep the forces there in action, in order to give the transports a better opportunity of running up the North river, with intent to cut off the communication between the country and city; that the King's standard was to be hoisted, and that the tories would then have a chance; that said Sutton further informed this deponent, that Robert Sutton, of Long island, would join the regulars with seven hundred men well equipped; that a proclamation would be issued out by the King's party; that the people would then know what they had to expect; and that there would be forty-five thousand troops sent over to America this Summer. And this deponent says, that he heard John Sutton (son of the aforesaid William) declare, that the regulars would land between Mamaroneck and Horseneck, and that he would join them. And this deponent further says, that he heard James Horton say that he was sure the Ministerial army would conquer, and that matters would soon be settled. And further says not.

By order of Committee.

JOHN THOMAS, JUNR., *Chairman.*

[*Journal Provincial Congress,* vol. II, p. 302.]

In Committee of Safety,
White Plains, July 13th, 1776.

The within deponent came before this committee, and made oath that he saw Joshua Gedney, of Dutchess county, have a long list of men's names who would join the Ministerial army; that said list of names was delivered to Governor Tryon by said Gedney, in the presence of this deponent. And this deponent further says: that he heard Caleb Fowler, junr. of North Castle, degrade the service he had been in, and that if he went again he would go like a man and join the Ministerial army.

By order of Committee.
John Thomas, Junr,
Chairman.

[*Ibid.*, p. 303.]

In Committee of Safety,
White Plains, July 15th, 1776.

Mr.—— came before this committee and made oath, that William Sutton, did, about fourteen days ago, at the house of Nicholas Morrell, at Mamaroneck, declare, in the presence of this deponent and James Reynolds, cabinet-maker of New-York, and several others, whose names this deponent does not at present recollect, that in case Independency was declared by the Continental Congress, that there were three colonels in the service that would join the Ministerial army. And further says not.

By order of Committee.
John Thomas, Junr,
Chairman.

[*Ibid.*]

Letter from Gen. Scott.

New York, July 15th, 1776.

Sir — This will be delivered to you by Lieut. Cole, of my brigade. He is from Queens, and should have been under the command of the Richmond captains, had he not proved a villain and joined the enemy. I do not know what to do with him in the present situation of things. He has 12 men with now in camp; he expects by the evening to be made up to 25. It would be a great pity to lose so stout and handsome a young fellow. I could provide him with a second lieutenancy; but he has too much spirit to be degraded. I like him well, and wish something may be done for him by Congress. It is possible, sir, that the Congress can sustain the clamours of the army, and the murmuring of the inhabitants, occasioned by their retreat. For God sake, for the honour of the State of New York, and for their own honour, bring them back if possible.

I am, sir, your most obedt. servt,

Jno. Morin Scott.

[*Journal Provincial Congress of New York*, vol. II, p. 302.]

Letter from W. Rogers.

Fire Island, June 21, 1776.

Gentlemen — I expect you have heard of the two prizes brought in here, and may think strange that we were not in the way; we seem to be damned unlucky, for that day we were heaving down, the vessels came from the eastward

close along shore, they only had to go about two miles over the bar and bring them both in; fortune favored them in every respect, for they went out with the wind to the northward, and as soon as they got on board the ship, the wind came round to the seaward so that they come right on before the wind, for there was not a man on board that could put the ship on stays. That it is damned hard to think that we have cruised so long and got nothing, to see a thing that has not been a league from the land, but been a thumming along shore, go out and bring in two prizes before our eyes, and could not have any hand in it. On the 14th instant at daylight we saw a sail in the offing we gave her chase, at 8 came so nigh that we discovered her to be a ship of war; we were then about 6 or 7 leagues from the land, with the wind off shore. When we saw what she was, we hauled our wind and stood from her, she then gave chase; at meridian we got into this inlet, when we crossed the bar, the ship was in about a mile of us; we saved ourselves and that was all. On the 17th I received the things that you sent by Lieut. Thew; on the 18th hauled into the creek; 19th, hove down, which was the day the prizes were brought in. We have now got all on board, and out of the creek; have little wood and water to get, which I shall do as soon as possible. On the 19th at night, we had six men deserted from Fire island; our own boat was secured so that I was under no apprehension of their getting off the island; but there was a party of soldiers on the other end of the island with a whale boat; they went there and took the boat from along side the tent and went off with her; their names are, Thomas Butler, Richard Gildersleve, Ebenezer Conkling, Solomon Kitcham, Jonathan Armstrong, and Elisha Reeves. Butler is a short mulatto looking fellow, married to one Michael Shruns' or Thrums' daughter, at the sign of the Black Horse in Bowre Lain. Conkling, Kitcham, and

Gildersleeve, all belong to Huntington, and have gone home I hear. Reeves and Armstrong belong to Southold. Butler, I expect, may be found in New-York; and if the Congress or Committee of Safety writes to the Committees of Huntington and Southold, they may all be taken; for if they are permitted to desert, and taken no notice of, we shall not be able to keep a man; for every affront they will go off. If they have anything to complain of about their treatment, I am ready to answer for it.

I am, gentlemen,
Your most obt. humbl. servt.
W. Rogers.

To Mr. Van Zandt and Capt. Randell.

[*Journal Provincial Congress of New York*, vol. II, p. 467.]

Letters from Messrs. Benson, Smith and Cantine, Commissioners of Conspiracies, informing the Council of Safety that a number of Quakers have lately been to Long-island without permission, &c.

Poughkeepsie, June 18th, 1777.

Sir — A number of the people called Quakers, have lately been to Long island without permission, to attend their annual meeting at Flushing; as soon as we received information of it, we issued the necessary orders to have them apprehended, and we have now several detained as prisoners at this place; they aver that they attended the meeting solely for religious purposes, and that they have not in the least intermeddled in political matters; we are not possessed of any evidence either that they have or have not. As there are upwards of twenty in this predicament, we conceive it a matter of too much importance to deter-

mine it until we had previously communicated the state of it to the Council of Safety, for their advice and directions; you will please therefore to lay the same before the Council, and we shall be happy in their speedy instructions.

We remain, respectfully,
Your very hble. servants,
EGBT. BENSON,
MELANCTON SMITH,
PETER CANTINE, JUNR.
Commissioners.

To the Hon. PIERRE VAN CORTLANDT.

[*Ibid.*]

[14 A.]

Letters of Colden and Tryon.

To his Excellency, WM. TRYON, Esq., Capt. General, and Governor of the Province of New-York, and the territories thereon depending, in America: Chancellor and Vice Admiral of the same, &c., &c.

May it please your Excellency,—we, the freeholders and inhabitants of Queens county, are happy once again to address your Excellency in the capital of the Province. We heartily congratulate you on your return, which we consider as the earnest of farther success, and hope ere long the whole Province will feel the blessings of your Excellency's upright administration.

Anxiously do we look forward to the time, when the disobedient shall return to their duty, and the ravages of war cease to desolate this once flourishing country.

That we may be restored to the King's most gracious protection, torn from us by the hand of violence; and

quicken others by our example to embrace the repeated invitations of his Majesty's commissioners, we have resolved on and subscribed a dutiful representation and petition, setting forth to them our loyal disposition, and praying that the county may be declared at the King's peace.

We entreat your Excellency to present our petition; and rely on your known humanity and benevolence for the exertion of your influence in behalf of the well affected county of Queens, that it may again in the bosom of peace enjoy the royal favor under your Excellency's paternal care and attention.

Signed by desire and in behalf of 1293 freeholders and inhabitants, by DAVID COLDEN.

Queens County, Oct. 21, 1776.

[*Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents Queens Co.*, p. 109.]

New York, Nov. 12th, 1776.

SIR—In compliance with the request in the address presented to me by you, in behalf of the inhabitants of Queens county, I immediately after my return from head quarters waited on Lord HOWE, one of the King's commissioners for restoring peace to his Majesty's colonies, and presented to his Lordship the very dutiful and loyal petition and representation of the said inhabitants, who was pleased to say, "He would take the earliest opportunity of communicating with Gen. HOWE on the occasion."

This public testimony from the inhabitants of Queens county, of their unshaken loyalty to our most gracious sovereign, and of their zealous attachment to the British constitution, is particularly agreeable to me, and entitles

them to my best endeavors for a speedy accomplishment of their wishes: the season and the expediency of the granting whereof are safely and happily committed to the wisdom and direction of his Majesty's commissioners.

I am, with regard, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

WM. TRYON.

DAVID COLDEN, Esq., of Queens Co.

[*Ibid.*]

[No. 15.]

Major Abner Benedict's Account of the Battle and of the Tornado which preceded it.

Abner Benedict was born at North Salem, New York, Nov. 9th, 1740. A classmate of Timothy Dwight, he graduated at Yale College, in 1769, and studied theology with the celebrated Dr. Bellamy, of Bethlehem, Conn. * * He was with the army in New York, and being deeply interested in the efforts put forth to destroy the enemy's ships by torpedos, made some inventions in submarine navigation, which were looked upon with great favor by those to whom they were submitted. He often spoke of the excitement which the news of the landing of the British on Long Island created in the army, and of the effects on the inhabitants, who saw that the final struggle for New York was at hand. The day around which clustered such momentous destinies, closed with what seemed an awful omen of good or ill to the American cause. Mr. Benedict was in the ranks on Brooklyn Heights at the time from the ramparts of which he could look out on the rolling country dotted with troops, hurrying in every direction.

The most intense excitement prevailed throughout the city, and reenforcements had been pushed rapidly forward all day to meet the coming shock.

But crowded as the day had been with anxious fears and gloomy forebodings, the coming on of evening brought new terrors. In the west slowly rose a thunder-cloud, the glittering, coruscated edges of which seemed solid as marble, so that when the sun passed behind it, it was like a total eclipse, and sudden darkness fell on sea and land.

Mr. Benedict's description of the appearance and passage of the thunder-cloud was appalling. As it continued to rise higher and higher, he observed that it was surcharged with electricity, for the lightning was constantly searching it from limit to limit, and the deep reverberations that rolled along the heavens without intermission, sounded more like successive billows bursting on the shore, than the irregular discharges of a thunder-cloud.

At length, at seven o'clock, it began to rain. All before had been the skirmishing that precedes the battle, but now like some huge monster that cloud suddenly gaped and shot forth flame. Then followed a crash louder than a thousand cannon discharged at once. It was appalling. The soldiers involuntary cowered before it. In a few moments the entire heavens became black as ink, and from horizon to horizon the whole empyrean was ablaze with lightning, while the thunder that followed did not come in successive peals, but in one long and continuous crash, as if the very frame work of the skies was falling to pieces, accompanied with a confused sound, as though the fragments were tumbling into a profound abyss. The lightning fell in masses and sheets of fire to the earth, and seemed to be striking incessantly and on every side. There was an apparent recklessness and wildness about the unloosed strength of the elements that was absolutely terrifying. The power that was abroad seemed sufficient

to crush the earth into a thousand fragments. The fort was as silent as the grave, for the strongest heart bent before this exhibition of God's terrible majesty. It did not pass away like an ordinary shower, for the cloud appeared to stand still, and swing round and round like a horizontal wheel over the devoted city. It clung to it with a tenacity that was frightful. For three hours, or from seven to ten, the deafening uproar continued without cessation or abatement. When it finally took its tumultuous departure, every heart felt relieved.

The morning dawned mild and peaceful, as if nothing unusual had happened, but soon reports began to come in of the devastation and death the storm had spread around. There was no end of the accounts of almost miraculous escapes of the inmates of houses that were struck. In others the inhabitants were more or less injured. A soldier, passing through one of the streets, without receiving apparently any external injury was struck deaf, dumb and blind. A captain and two lieutenants belonging to McDougal's regiment, were killed by one thunderbolt; the points of their swords melted off, and the coin melted in their pockets. Their bodies appeared as if they had been roasted, so black and crisped was the skin. Ten men encamped outside the fort near the river, and occupying one tent, were killed by a single flash. When the tent, that had fallen upon them, was lifted, they lay scattered around on the ground, presenting a most melancholy appearance. They belonged to one of the Connecticut regiments and were buried in one grave. The service performed by the chaplain was very solemn and impressive. Familiar as we become with death in the midst of war, it somehow affects us very differently when sent, apparently, direct from the hand of God. In battle we hear the roar of the guns, and after the smoke and tumult have passed away, we expect to see bleeding and mangled forms scattered around.

But there seems a hidden meaning, some secret purpose, when the bolt is launched, by an invisible arm, and from the mysterious depths of space.

From every side came in reports of soldiers more or less injured, and the excitement could hardly have been greater, and the returns caused more surprise, if there had been a night attack on the camp.

Mr. Benedict said he could not account for the cloud remaining so long stationary, unless the vast amount of arms collected in and about the city held it by attraction and drew from it such a fearful amount of electricity.[1]

At regimental prayers, next morning, he felt peculiarly solemn. The great battle so near at hand, to be perhaps a decisive one for his country, filled him with sad forebodings.

Scarcely were the religious services finished when strains of martial music were heard near the ferry, and not long after column after column came winding up the heights towards the fort. They were six battalions, sent over by Washington, accompanied by General Putnam, who was to take chief command. The General was received with loud cheers, and his presence inspired universal confidence.

In a short time the whole country, to the front and right as far as the eye could reach, was covered with the smoke of battle, and shook to the thunder of cannon. When the tumult ceased, the fields alive with fugitives from the American army, told how disastrous the day had been. Mr. Benedict's heart was filled with the most poignant sorrow, for not only had the Americans lost the battle, but the whole army was now threatened with total destruction. The silence of the evening was more oppressive than the uproar and carnage of the day, for, "*what now can save the*

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[1] This explanation was in accordance with the theory of thunder storms at that time.— Ed.

army?" trembled on every lip. No one believed the fort could be defended, as all the approaches to it were in the enemy's power; while the first movement to retreat across to the city would bring the ships of war lying just below into their midst.

In this fearful dilemma fervent prayers went up to Him who alone could deliver. As if in answer to those prayers, when night deepened, a dense fog came rolling in, and settled on land and water. At the same time, with the turn of the tide, a strong east wind arose, that sent the water with the force of a torrent into the bay, effectually preventing for the time the ships, if they had desired it, from entering the river. Under cover of this fog and the night Washington silently withdrew his entire army across the river to New York. Mr. Benedict, who watched the progress of this movement, with an anxiety that mocked expression, remained behind, while boat load after boat load drifted away in the darkness. When the army was all over, he then consented to go also, and stepping into a boat, was one of the last to leave that disastrous shore. He retreated with the army to Harlaem Heights, and was present in the skirmishes that followed, and witnessed the battle of White Plains. In the description of the army that succeeded the fall of Fort Washington, he returned to his parish.

[*Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution.*]

[No. 16.]

Journal of the Transactions of August 17, 1776, *upon Long Island; by Colonel Samuel J. Atlee.*

August 27, 1776.

This morning, before day, the camp was alarmed by an attack made upon that part of our picket guard upon the

lower road leading to the *Narrows*, commenced by Major *Burd* of the Pennsylvania Flying-Camp. About daylight a part of General Lord *Stirling's* Brigade then in camp, viz: the battalion, of *Maryland*, Colonel *Smallwood;* the *Delaware*, Colonel *Haslett;* about one hundred and twenty of my Battalion *Pennsylvania* Musquetry, and part of Lutz and Kiechlein's Battalions, *Pennsylvania* Militia; containing in the whole about two thousand three hundred men, under the command of Major-General *Sullivan*, and the Brigadiers *Stirling* and *Parsons*, were ordered to march out and support the picket attacked by the enemy.

About half after seven the enemy, consisting of the fourth and sixth Brigades of the *British* Army, composed of the Seventeenth, Fortieth, Forty-sixth, Fifty-fifth, Twenty-third, Forty-fourth, Fifty-seventh, Sixty-fourth, and Forty-second Regiments, were observed advancing about two and a half miles from our lines at Brookline in regular order, their field artillery in front.

I then received orders from Lord *Stirling* to advance with my battalion, and oppose the enemy's passing a morass or swamp, at the foot of a fine rising ground, upon which they were first discovered, and thereby give time to our brigade to form upon the heights. This order I immediately obeyed, notwithstanding we must be exposed, without any kind of cover, to the great fire of the enemy's musketry and field pieces, charged with round and grape shot, and finely situated upon the eminence above mentioned, having the entire command of the ground I was ordered to occupy. My battalion, although new and never before having the opportunity of facing an enemy, sustained their fire until the brigade had formed; but finding we could not possibly prevent their crossing the swamp, I ordered my detachment to file off to the left, and take post in a wood upon the left of the brigade. Here I looked upon myself advantageously situated, and

might be enabled, upon the advance of the enemy, to give him a warm reception. In this affair I lost but one soldier, shot with a grape shot through his throat. I had not taken post in the above mentioned wood but a few minutes when I received a reinforcement of two companies of the *Delawares*, under Captain *Stedman*, with orders from Lord *Stirling* to file off further to the left and prevent, if possible, a body of the enemy observed advancing to flank the brigade.

The enemy's troops by this time had passed the swamp and formed in line of battle opposite ours. A heavy fire, as well from small arms as artillery, ensued, with very little damage on our side; what the enemy sustained we could not judge. Upon filing off to the left, according to the orders I had received, I espied at the distance of about three hundred yards a hill of clear ground, which I judged to be a proper situation to oppose the troops ordered to flank us, and which I determined, if possible, to gain before them. At the foot of this hill a few of *Huntington's Connecticut* Regiment, that had been upon the picket, joined me. In order to gain and secure the hill, I ordered the troops to wheel to the right and march up the hill abreast. When within about forty yards of the summit, we very unexpectedly received a very heavy fire from the enemy taken post there before us, notwithstanding the forced march I made. The enemy's situation was so very advantageous, the back of the hill where they had taken post being formed by nature into a breast-work, that had they directed their fire properly or been marksmen, they must have cut off the greatest part of my detachment. I having, before I advanced the hill, posted a part of my small number along the skirt of a wood upon my right, and left a guard at the foot of the hill, to prevent my being surrounded, and my retreat to the brigade in case of necessity, being cut off, the enemy being vastly superior in numbers, their detachment consisting of the Twenty-third

and Forty-fourth Regiments and part of the Seventeenth. Upon receiving the above heavy fire, which continued very warm and they secure behind the hill, a small halt was made, and the detachment fell back a few paces. Here Capt. *Stedman*, with all the *Delawares*, except the Lieutenants *Stewart* and *Harney*, with about sixteen privates, left me, and drew after them some of my own. The remainder, after recovering a little from this, their first shock, I ordered to advance, at the same time desiring them to preserve their fire and aim aright. They immediately, with the resolution of veteran soldiers, obeyed the order. The enemy, finding their opponents fast advancing, and determined to dispute the ground with them, fled with precipitation, leaving behind them twelve killed upon the spot, and a Lieutenant and four privates wounded. In this engagement I lost my worthy friend and Lieutenant-Colonel (*Parry*,) shot through the head, who fell without a groan, fighting in defence of his much injured country. In the midst of the action I ordered four soldiers to carry him as speedily as possible within the lines at Brookline.

My brave fellows, flushed with this advantage, were for pushing forward after the flying enemy; but perceiving at about sixty yards from the hill we had gained, across a hollow way, a stone fence lined with wood, from behind which we might be greatly annoyed, and fearing an ambuscade might be there placed, I ordered not to advance farther, but to maintain the possession of the hill, where kind nature had formed a breastwork nearly semicircular. They halted, and found, by a heavy fire from the fence, it was lined as I suspected. The fire was as briskly returned; but the enemy finding it too hot, and losing a number of men, retreated to and joined the right of this wing of their Army.

After this first attack, which continued from the first fire about half an hour, we brought from the field

six wounded soldiers and about twenty muskets. The wounded I placed in my rear, under the shade of some bushes; the arms I distributed to such of the soldiers as were most indifferently armed. The wounded Lieutenant I sent, with two soldiers, to Lord *Stirling*.

After placing some Sentinels to observe the further movements of the enemy, if any should be made, I ordered my men, greatly fatigued, to rest themselves. In about twenty minutes the enemy was observed marching down to make a second attempt for the hill. The Sentinels gave the alarm. Officers and men immediately flew to arms, and with remarkable coolness and resolution sustained and returned their fire for about fifteen minutes, when the enemy were obliged once more to a precipitate flight, leaving behind them killed Lieutenant Colonel *Grant*, (a person, as I afterwards understood, much valued in the *British* army,) besides a number of privates, and some wounded. Such of the wounded as I thought might be assisted I had brought in and placed with the rest in my rear; one slightly through the leg I sent with a soldier to Lord Stirling. I had in this attack but one private wounded, with two balls through the body.

I now sent my adjutant, Mr. *Mentgis*, to his Lordship, with an account of the successive advantages I had gained, and to request a reinforcement, and such further orders as his Lordship should judge necessary. Two companies of Riflemen from Keichlien's Flying-Camp, soon after joined me, but were very soon ordered to rejoin their regiment, the reason for which I could not imagine, as I stood in such need of them. Very luckily, after our second engagement our ammunition cart, belonging to Colonel *Huntington's* regiment, arrived at my post, of which we stood in great need, having entirely emptied our cartridge boxes, and had used several rounds of the enemy's ammunition, of which I stripped the dead and wounded

every time we had the good fortune to beat them off the field. The officers were extremely alert, and from the ammunition so opportunely arrived, soon supplied their men with a sufficient stock to sustain another attack, if the enemy should think proper to make it.

They did not suffer us to wait long, for in about half an hour we were alarmed by our Sentinels of their approach the third time. The eagerness of the officers and soldiers to receive them deserve my warmest acknowledgements. They were received as usual, and as usual fled, after another conflict of about a quarter of an hour. I then was determined to pursue; but observing a regiment making down to sustain them, which proved to be the Forty-Second, or *Royal Highlanders*, I thought best to halt and prepare to receive them, should they advance upon me; but the drubbing their friends had so repeatedly received, I believe, prevented them, and they seemed fully satisfied to have protected the fugitives, and of conducting what was left, with such of the wounded as could crawl to them, to the Army. In these three attacks Major *Burd*, who was then a prisoner at General *Grant's* quarters, informed me at *New-York* a great number, both officers and privates, were brought to the Hospital wounded.

I fully expected as did most of my officers, that the strength of the *British* Army was advancing in this quarter to our lines. But how greatly were we deceived when intelligence was received by some scattering soldiers that the right wing and centre of the Army, amongst which were the *Hessians*, were advancing to surround us. This we were soon convinced of by an exceeding heavy fire in our rear. No troops having been posted to oppose the march of this grand body of the enemy's Army, but Colonel *Miles's* two battalions of Rifles, Colonel *Willis's* battalion of *Connecticut*, and a part of *Lutz & Kiechlien's* battalions of the *Pennsylvania* Flying-Camp, I once more sent my

adjutant to Lord *Stirling*, to acquaint him with the last success obtained by my party, and to request his further orders; but receiving no answer, the Adjutant not returning, and waiting near three quarters of an hour for the enemy, they not approaching in front, but those in the rear drawing near, I thought it most prudent to join the Brigade, where I might be of more advantage than in my present situation. I therefore ordered a march, leaving upon the field killed Lieutenant-Colonel *Grant* and about fifty others, and a number wounded and ten privates wounded which I had brought at sundry times into my rear, who I suppose were soon after found by their friends. What other officers were killed or wounded here I know not, except a Captain *Kennedy*, of the Forty-Fourth and the Lieutenant sent to Lord *Stirling*.

How great was my surprise I leave any one to judge, when, upon coming to the ground occupied by our troops, to find it evacuated and the troops gone off, without my receiving the least intelligence of the movement, or order what to do, although I had so shortly before sent my Adjutant to the General for that purpose. The General must have known, by my continuing in my post at the hill, I must, with all my party, inevitably fall a sacrifice to the enemy. An opportunity yet afforded, with risking the lives of some of us, of getting off. But perceiving a body of the enemy advancing, which proved to be the *English* Grenadiers, under Lieutenant-Colonel *Monckton*, to fall upon the rear of our brigade, which I could see at a distance, I ordered my party once more to advance and support a few brave fellows, endeavoring to prevent, but without success, the destruction of their countrymen. The timely assistance of a number often tried, and as often victorious, encouraged those already engaged, and obliged the enemy to quit the ground they had gained and retire to a fence lined with trees. Here we kept up a close fire,

until the brigade had retreated out of our sight, when, not being able, through the weakness of my party, already greatly fatigued, and once more destitute of ammunition, to break through the enemy, and finding my retreat after the brigade cut off, I filed off to the right, to endeavour, if possible, to escape through that quarter. Lieutenant *Caldwell*, in this last attack, received a slight wound in the hand; Lieutenant-Colonel *Monckton*, of the Grenadiers, received a wound through the body.

After marching about half a mile to the right, fell in with General *Parsons* and a small number by him collected. In consultation with the General it was determined to break through the enemy, who were here within a little way of us, and endeavour to make up the Island. I then pushed off, with such of the officers and soldiers that were willing to run this hazard. What became of General *Parsons* I know not, never having seen him since. I had not gone above two hundred yards, when a *Highlander* made his appearance in the edge of a wood. I instantly presented, as did some of those with me. The fellow clubbed his firelock and begged for quarter. I had hardly time to assure him of it, when I found him to be a decoy sent from a party of *Highlanders*, within fifty yards of our right. I immediately jumped forward, ordering the party to follow, taking with me the *Highlander's* musket, which I had, fortunately for me, deprived him of. We received in our flight the fire of this party, and sundry others through which we were obliged to run for near two miles. What of my party, or if any, in this flight were killed, wounded, or taken, I cannot tell, as it is uncertain how many, or who they were, that followed me. I imagined that if I could cross the *Flatbush* road, I could then make my escape by *Hell-Gate*, but coming to the road found it everywhere strictly guarded. After trying the road in several places, both to the right and left, and finding no passage,

we retired to an eminence about sixty perches from the road, to consult whether best to conceal ourselves in the adjacent swamps or divide into small parties, when we espied a party of *Hessians*, who had discovered and were endeavouring to surround us. The opinion we had formed of these troops determined us to run any risk rather than fall into their hands; and finding after all our struggles no prospect of escaping, we determined to throw ourselves into the mercy of a battalion of *Highlanders* posted upon an eminence near the *Flatbush* road, not far from where we had last sat. This we did about five o'clock in the afternoon to the number of twenty-three, thereby escaping the pursuit of a party of *Hessians*, who came to the *Highlanders* immediately after our surrender. We had remained with this regiment above twenty minutes, during which time the officers and men behaved very civil, when we were conducted, under a strong guard, through the right wing of the enemy's Army to the Head-Quarters of General *Howe* at *Bedford;* receiving, as we passed, the most scurrilous and abusive language, both from the officers, soldiers, and camp-ladies, every one at that time turning hangman, and demanding of the guard why we were taken, why we were not put to the bayonet, and hanged, &c., &c., &c., &c.

Serenaded thus by the musical tongues of *Britons*, we arrived at *Bedford*, where, for sixteen besides myself, we were favoured with a soldier's tent, in which we had not room to lie down, and nothing allowed us for covering. To sum up the whole, we were consigned to the care of the most infamous of mankind, the Provost-Marshal, one *Cunningham*.

Thus ended this most unfortunate 27th of *August*, 1776, during which myself and my detachment underwent great fatigue, and escaped death in a variety of instances. And I am happy to reflect that during the whole of this peril-

ous day, one and all, to the utmost of their powers and abilities, exerted themselves in performing their several duties, for which I shall ever retain a grateful sense, and do, for and in behalf of my country, return them my sincere acknowledgments, as I flatter myself, under *God*, they were the means of twice preserving the brigade from being cut to pieces: first, in preventing the troops in which *Grant* bore a command from falling upon the left flank; and lastly, in so bravely attacking the Grenadiers, where *Monckton* commanded, and thereby preventing the destruction of the rear. In the first *Grant* fell, in the latter was *Monckton* wounded. What followed since the 27th, I have not now time to insert; shall leave it till I have the pleasure of seeing you.

S. J. Atlee.

Of the Grenadiers, I hear there were besides officers, nearly sixty killed and wounded.

[*American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, fol. 1251.]

[No. 17.]

Burning of Judge Leffert's House. Gen. Sullivan's Account of the Skirmish at Flatbush.

Long Island, Aug. 23d, 1776.

Dear General: This afternoon the enemy formed, and attempted to pass the road by *Bedford*. A smart fire between them and the Riflemen ensued. The officer sent off for a reinforcement, which I ordered immediately. A number of Musketry came to the assistance of the Riflemen, whose fire, with that of our field pieces, caused a retreat of the enemy. Our men followed them to the

house of Judge *Lefferts* (where a number of them had taken lodgings,) drove them out, and burnt the house and a number of other buildings contiguous. They think they killed a number; and, as evidence of it, they produce three officers' hangers, a carbine, and one dead body, with a considerable sum of money in pocket. I have ordered a party out for prisoners to-night. We have driven them half a mile from their former station. These things argue well for us, and I hope are so many preludes to a general victory.

Dear General, I am, with much esteem, your very humble servant

JNO. SULLIVAN.

To General Washington.

[*American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, fol. 1136.]

[The foregoing letter was submitted to Congress by General Washington, with the following communication.]

New York, August 24, 1776.

To the President of Congress.

SIR: The irregularity of the posts prevents your receiving the early and constant intelligence it is my wish to communicate. This is the third letter which you will probably receive from me by the same post. The first was of little or no consequence, but that of yesterday gave you the best information I had been able to obtain of the enemy's landing and movements upon *Long-Island*. Having occasion to go over thither yesterday, I sent my letter to the post office at the usual hour, (being informed that the rider was expected every moment, and would go out again directly,) but in the evening, when I sent to inquire, none had come in.

I now enclose you a report made to me by General Sullivan after I left *Long-Island* yesterday. I do not conceive

that the enemy's whole force was in motion, but a detached party rather. I have sent over four more regiments, with boats, to be ready to reinforce the troops under General *Sullivan*, or to return to this place if the remainder of the fleet at the watering place should push up to the city, which hitherto (I mean since the landing upon *Long-Island*) they have not had in their power to do, on account of the wind, which has either been ahead, or too small, when the tide has served. I have nothing further to trouble the Congress with at present, than that I am their and your most obedient, humble servant,

GO. WASHINGTON.

[*Ibid.*]

[Washington also wrote to Gen. Schuyler, on the 24th, an account of the skirmish at Flatbush, with some additional particulars.]

* * * On *Wednesday* night and *Thursday* morning a considerable body of the enemy, said to be eight or nine thousand, landed at *Gravesend Bay*, on *Long-Island*. They have approached within three miles of our lines; and yesterday there was some skirmishing between a detachment of them, and a party from our troops. Their detachments were obliged to give ground, and were pursued as far as where they had a post at a Judge *Lefferts's*. His house and outhouses served as quarters for them, and were burned by our people. We sustained no loss in this affair, that I have heard of, except having two men slightly wounded. Our people say the enemy met with more; they found one dead body, in the habit of a soldier, with a good deal of money in his pocket, and got

three hangers and a fusee. They fired a shell from a howitz, which fell on and burst in a house where some of the enemy were; but whether they were injured by it, I have not learned. A firing has been heard this morning, but know nothing of the event.

Go. Washington.

[*Ibid.*, 1142.]

[No. 18.]

Extracts from two Letters from an Officer in Col. Atlee's Battalion, of Pennsylvania.

Dated New York, August 27, 1776.

Yesterday about one hundred and twenty of our men went as a guard to a place called *Red Lion*, on *Long Island*. About eleven o'clock at night the sentries descried two men coming up a water-melon patch, upon which our men fired upon them; the enemy then retreated, and about one o'clock advanced with about two or three hundred men, and endeavoured to surround our guard; but they being watchful gave them two or three fires, and retreated to alarm the remainder of the battalion, except one Lieutenant and about fifteen men, who have not been heard of as yet. About four o'clock this morning the alarm was given by beating to arms, when the remainder of our battalion, accompanied by the *Delaware* and *Maryland* battalions, went to the place where our men retreated from. About a quarter of a mile on this side, we saw the enemy, when we got into the woods (our battalion being the advance guard) amidst the incessant fire of their field pieces, loaded with grape shot, which continued till ten o'clock. The *Marylanders* on their left flank, and we on

their right, kept up a constant fire amidst all their cannon, and saw several of them fall; but they being too many for us, we retreated a little, and then made a stand. Our Lieutenant-Colonel, *Parry*, was shot through the head, and I was under the necessity of retreating with him to this place, in order to secure his effects. Since which I have heard the enemy are within six hundred yards of our lines; which I think will cost them some number of men before they gain them.

[*American Archives*, 5th Series, fol. 1183, vol. I.]

New York, August 29, 1776.

I have just now come over to this place about some business, and embrace the opportunity of letting you know that I wrote you on the 27th instant, giving some particulars of our engagement. I now have to acquaint you that the enemy, endeavouring to force our lines, met with a warmer reception than they thought of; for the batteries began to play, and mowed them down like grass, when they retreated, and our Army cried out, "the day is our own;" but am sorry to inform you that Generals *Sullivan* and *Stirling* are taken prisoners, and that we have missing (which I apprehend are also taken) Colonel *Atlee*, Captain *Howell*, Captain *Herbert*, Captain *Murray*, and Captain *Nice*, Lieutenant *Finney*, Ensign *Hustin*, and Dr. *Davis*, with eighty privates; so you may judge what a miserable battalion we must have. There is also missing from the Rifle battalion Colonel *Miles* and Colonel *Piper*, with several other officers, whose names I have not as yet heard, and a number of privates. The enemy, by accounts which we have received, have lost (killed, wounded, and taken prisoners) about eight hundred men, among whom is

General *Grant* killed. We expect every hour a second engagement, which I pray *God* may be more prosperous on our side than the last; for besides what I have mentioned, the *Deleware* and *Maryland* battalions suffered much.

[*American Archives*, vol. I, fol. 1212.]

[No. 19.]

The Burning of Houses at Flatbush, and Marauding by the Americans.

Head Quarters, 25th of August, 1776.

To Major General Putnam.

SIR: It was with no small degree of concern, that I perceived yesterday, a scattering, unmeaning, and wasteful fire from our people, at the enemy. No one good consequence can attend such irregularities, but several bad ones will inevitably follow from them. Had it not been for this unsoldierlike and disorderly practice, we have the greatest reason imaginable to believe, that numbers of deserters would have left the enemy's army last year; but fear prevented them from approaching our lines then, and must forever continue to operate in like manner, whilst every soldier conceives himself at liberty to fire when and at what he pleases. This is not the only nor the greatest evil resulting from the practice; for, as we do not know the hour of the enemy's approach to our lines, but have every reason to apprehend that it will be sudden and violent whenever attempted, we shall have our men so scattered, and more than probable without ammunition, that the consequences must prove fatal to us;

besides this, there will be no possibility of distinguishing between a real and a false alarm.

I must therefore, Sir, in earnest terms desire you to call the colonels and commanding officers of corps, without loss of time before you; and let them afterwards do the same by their respective officers, and charge them, in express and positive terms, to stop these irregularities, as they value the good of the service, their own honor, and the safety of the army, which, under God, depends wholly upon the good order and government that is observed in it. At the same time, I would have you form a proper line of defense round your encampment and works on the most advantageous ground. Your guards which compose this defence, are to be particularly instructed in their duty, and a brigadier of the day is to remain constantly upon the lines, that he may be upon the spot to command, and see that orders are executed. Field-officers should also be appointed to go the rounds, and report the situation of the guards; and no person should be allowed to pass beyond the guards, without special order in writing.

By restraining the loose, disorderly, and unsoldierlike firing before mentioned, I do not mean to discourage partisans and scouting parties; on the contrary I wish to see a spirit of this sort prevailing, under proper regulations, and officers, either commissioned or non-commissioned, as cases shall require, to be directed by yourself or licensed by the brigadier of the day upon the spot, to be sent upon this service. Such skirmishing as may be effected in this manner will be agreeable to the rules of propriety, and may be attended with salutary effects, inasmuch as it will inure the troops to fatigue and danger, will harass the enemy, and may make prisoners and prevent their parties from getting the horses and cattle from the interior parts of the Island, which are objects of infinite importance to us, especially the two last. All the

men upon duty are to be compelled to remain in or near their respective camps, or quarters, that they may turn out at a moment's warning; nothing being more probable, than that the enemy will allow little time enough to prepare for the attack. The officers also are to exert themselves to the utmost to prevent every kind of abuse to private property, and to bring every offender to the punishment he deserves. Shameful it is to find, that those men, who have come hither in defence of the rights of mankind, should turn invaders of it by destroying the substance of their friends. The burning of houses where the apparent good of the service is not promoted by it, and the pillaging of them, at all times, and upon all occasions, are to be discountenanced and punished with the utmost severity. In short, it is to be hoped, that men who have property of their own, and a regard for the rights of others, will shudder at the thought of rendering any man's situation, to whose protection he had come, more insufferable than his open and avowed enemy would make it; when by duty and every rule of humanity they ought to aid, and not oppress, the distressed in their habitations. The distinction between a well regulated army and a mob, is the good order and discipline of the former, and the licentious and disorderly behaviour of the latter. Men, therefore, who are not employed as mere hirelings, but have stepped forth in defence of everything, that is dear and valuable not only to themselves but to posterity, should take uncommon pains to conduct themselves with the greatest propriety and good order, as their honor and reputation call loudly upon them to do it.

The wood next to Red Hook should be well attended to. Put some of the most disorderly riflemen into it. The militia are the most indifferent troops, those I mean who are least tutored and have seen least service, and will do for the interior works, whilst your best men should at all

hazards prevent the enemy's passing the wood, and approaching your works. The woods should be secured by *abatis* where necessary, to make the enemy's approach as difficult as possible. Traps and ambuscades should be laid for their parties, if you find they are sent out after cattle.

I am, &c.,

Go. Washington.

[*Sparks's Letters of Washington*, vol. IV, page 62.]

[No. 20.]

Gen. Sullivan at the Battle of Valley Grove.

[Gen. John Sullivan was never subjected to a formal trial, though he felt it necessary to offer considerable evidence of his good conduct in the various affairs in which he participated. On the 25th of Oct., 1777, he wrote to the President of Congress, vigorously defending himself from the charges made against him on the floor of the House, and in this letter we obtain his only report of the battle of the 27th.]

"Camp near White Marsh, Oct. 25, 1777.

"Much Esteemed Sir: In a letter from Mr. Burk, member from North Carolina, dated the 12th inst., he informs me that he has represented to Congress that I was posted with the command on the right wing of our Army, previous to the battle of Brandywine.

"2d. That I was early in the day cautioned by the Commander in Chief to be particularly attentive to the enemy's motions, who he supposed would attempt to cross higher up the Creek: and that I was furnished with Light

Troops for that purpose, which I neglected, and suffered to come upon me by a route I never expected.

"3d. That I conveyed false intelligence to the General, which caused him to alter his dispositions, and brought on a defeat.

"4th. That when the mistake was at length discovered, I brought up my Troops by a circuitous march, and in a disorder from which they never recovered.

"5th. That he heard my officers lamenting in the bitterest terms that they were cursed with such a Commander, whose evil conduct was ever productive of misfortune to the Army.

"6th. That my Troops had no confidence in my conduct.

"7th. That I had not sufficient talents for my rank and office; that I am void of judgment and foresight in concocting, of deliberate vigor in executing, and of presence of mind under accidents and emergencies, from which has arisen my repeated ill success."

[After illustrating the injustice of these charges by a description of the various affairs, where he had commanded, he says:]

"I know it has been generally reported that I commanded on Long Island when the actions happened there. This is by no means true; *General Putnam* had taken the command from me four days before the action; Lord Stirling commanded the main body without the lines; I was to have command under General Putnam within the lines. I was very uneasy about a road through which I had often foretold the enemy would come, but could not persuade others to be of my opinion. I went to the Hill near Flatbush to reconnoitre the enemy, and, with a piquet of four hundred men, was surrounded by the enemy, who had advanced by the very road I had foretold, and which I had paid horsemen fifty dollars for patrolling by

night, while I had the command, as I had no foot for the purpose, for which I was never reimbursed, as it was supposed unnecessary. What resistance I made with these 400 men against the British Army, I leave to the officers who were with me to declare. Let it suffice for me to say, the opposition of the small party lasted from half past nine to twelve o'clock. I challenge any person to mention a single instance of my being unfortunate, except in common with the Army; without them I have done nothing, except on Staten Island." * * *

"P. S. The reason of the few Troops being on Long Island, was because it was generally supposed that the enemy's landing there was only a feint to draw our Troops there, that they might the more easily possess themselves of New York. I have often urged both by word and writing, that, as the enemy had doubtless both these objects in view, they would first try for Long Island, which commanded the other, and then New York (which was completely commanded by it) would fall of course. But in this I was unhappy enough to differ from almost every officer in the Army till the event proved my conjectures were just."

[In another letter written Nov. 9th, 1777, after bitterly rehearsing the subjects of his grievances, and the details of his services, Gen. Sullivan says:] "I had the misfortune on Long Island, with four hundred men, to combat with the greater part of the British Army for near three hours, having been surrounded, by the enemy's coming by a route which I often predicted, and which I had previous to Gen. Putnam's coming over and taking the command from me, paid fifty dollars to horsemen to patrol. I was so persuaded of the enemy's coming the route, that I went to examine, and was surrounded by the British army, and after a long and severe engagement was made prisoner."

[With these meagre and unsatisfactory details of the contest at Valley Grove, we must now rest, expressing a wish that the General could have found it convenient to have prepared a full and circumstantial account. The letters from which these fragments have been taken, may, with other curious documents, be found in his papers relating to the battle of the Brandywine.]

[*Pennsylvania His. Soc. Bulletin*, vol. I, No. 8.]

[No. 21.]

Accounts of the Landing of the British, and the Thunder Storm of Aug. 21.

Dated August 22, 1776.

"This night we have reason to expect the grand attack from our barbarian enemies; the reasons why, follow: The night before last, a lad went over to *Staten-Island*, supped there with a friend, and got safe back again undiscovered; soon after he went to General *Washington*, and upon good authority reported, that the *English* Army, amounting to fifteen or twenty thousand, had embarked, and were in readiness for an engagement; that seven ships of the line, and a number of other vessels of war, were to surround this city, and cover their landing; that the *Hessians*, being fifteen thousand, were to remain on the Island, and attack *Perth-Amboy*, *Elizabeth-Town Point*, and *Bergen*, while the main body were doing their best here; that the Highlanders expected *America* was already conquered, and that they were only to come over and settle on our lands, for which reason they had brought their churns, ploughs, &c.; being deceived, they had refused fighting, upon which account General *Howe* had shot one, hung five or six, and flogged many.

"Last evening, in a violent thunder storm, Mr. —— (a very intelligent person) ventured over. He brings much the same account as the above lad, with this addition, that all the horses on the Island were, by *Howe's* orders, killed, barrelled up, and put on board, the wretches thinking that they could get no landing here, and of consequence be soon out of provision. That the Tories were used cruelly, and with the Highlanders were compelled to go on board the ships to fight in the character of common soldiers against us. The *British* Army are prodigiously incensed against the Tories, and curse them as the instruments of the war now raging. Mr. —— further informs, that last night the fleet were to come up, but that the thunder-storm prevented. The truth of this appears, from the circumstance of about three thousand red-coats landing at ten o'clock this morning on *Long Island*, where, by this time, it is supposed our people are hard at it. There is an abundance of smock to-day on *Long Island*, our folks having set fire to stacks of hay, &c., to prevent the enemy's being benefited in case they get any advantage against us. All the troops in the city are in high spirits, and have been under arms most of the day, as the fleet have been in motion, and are now, as is generally thought, only waiting for a change of tide. Forty-eight hours or less, I believe, will determine it as to *New-York*, one way or the other.

"The thunder-storm of last evening was one of the most dreadful I ever heard; it lasted from seven to ten o'clock. Several claps struck in and about the city; many houses were damaged; several lives lost. Three officers, a Captain and two Lieutenants, belonging to Colonel *McDougall's* regiment, encamped opposite to us, were struck instantly dead, the points of their swords for several inches melted, with a few silver dollars they had in their pockets; they (the persons) were seemingly roasted. A dog in the same

tent was also killed; a soldier near it struck blind, deaf, and dumb. One in the main street was killed, as likewise ten on *Long Island;* two or three were much burnt and greatly hurt. When *God* speaks, who can but fear?"

[*American Archives,* 5th Series, vol. 1, 1111.]

Extract from a Letter

Dated New York, Aug. 26, 1776.

"*Wednesday* evening last we had here as violent a thunder gust as has been remembered by the oldest man now living amongst us. The lightning struck a markee in General *McDougall's* camp, near the *Bull's Head* in the Bowery, and instantly killed Captain *Van Wyck* and his two Lieutenants *Versereau* and *Depyster.* A soldier named *Ephraim Bartlet* was also killed in the house of Mr. *Joseph Hallet* in Hanover Square, and several others much hurt. We also hear four men were killed on *Long Island* and some houses and barns burnt near *Tappan.*"

[*Ibid.,* 1163.]

[No. 22.]

Announcement of the Landing of the British to Gov. Trumbull by Gen. Washington.

New York, August 24, 1776.

Sir: On *Thursday* last the enemy landed a body of troops, supposed to amount (from the best accounts I have been

able to obtain) to eight or nine thousand men, at *Gravesend Bay* on *Long-Island*, ten miles distance from our works on the Island, and immediately marched through the open lands to *Flatbush*, where they are now encamped. They are distant about three miles from our lines, and have woods and broken grounds to pass (which we have lined) before they can get to them. Some skirmishing has happened between their advanced parties and ours, in which we have always obtained an advantage. What the real designs of the enemy are, I am not yet able to determine. My opinion of the matter is, that they mean to attack our works on the Island and this city at the same time, and that the troops at *Flatbush* are waiting in those plains till the wind and tide (which have not yet served together) will favour the movement of the shipping to this place: others think they will bend their principal force against our lines on the Island, which, if carried, will greatly facilitate their designs upon this city. This also being very probable, I have thrown what force I can over, without leaving myself too much exposed here; for our whole number (if the intelligence we get from deserters, &c., be true) falls short of that of the enemy; consequently the defence of our own works, and the approaches to them, is all we can aim at. This, then, in a manner, leaves the whole Island in possession of the enemy, and of course of the supplies it is capable of affording them. Under these circumstances, would it be practicable for your Government to throw a body of one thousand or more men across the Sound, to harass the enemy in their rear or upon their flanks? This would annoy them exceedingly, at the same time that a valuable end, to wit, that of preventing their parties securing the stocks of cattle, &c., would be answered by it; the cattle to be removed or killed. The knowledge I have of the extraordinary exertions of your State upon all occasions, does not permit me to require this, not

knowing how far it is practicable; I only offer it, therefore as a matter for your consideration, and of great publick utility, if it can be accomplished.

The enemy, if my intelligence from Staten Island be true, are at this time rather distressed on account of provisions; if, then, we can deprive them of what this Island affords, much good will follow from it.

The foreigners are yet upon *Staten Island*, the *British* troops are upon *Long-Island* and on Ship-board.

With great respect and esteem, I remain, sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

Go. Washington.

To Governour Trumbull, Connecticut.

[*American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, folio 1143.]

[No. 23.]

Admiralty Office, October 10, 1776.

Extract of a Letter from Lord Viscount Howe, Vice-Admiral of the White, and Commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels in North America, to Mr. Stephens, dated on board the Eagle, off Bedlow's Island New-York, the 31st day of August, 1776.

"Gen. *Howe*, giving me notice of his intention to make a descent in *Gravesend Bay*, on *Long-Island*, on the morning of the 22d, the necessary disposition was made, and seventy-five flat boats, with eleven batteaus and two galleys, built for the occasion, were prepared for that service. The command of the whole remained with Commodore *Hotham*. The Captains *Walker*, *Wallace*, and *Dickson*, in the *Phœnix*, *Rose*, and *Greyhound*, with the *Thunder* and *Carcass* bombs, under the direction of Colonel *James*, were appointed to cover the landing. The flat-boats, galleys, and three batteaus manned from the ships-of-war, were

formed into divisions, commanded respectively by the Captains *Vandeput*, *Mason*, *Curtis*, *Caldwell*, *Phipps*, *Caulfield*, *Uppleby*, and *Duncan*, and Lieutenant *Reeve*, of the *Eagle*. The rest of the batteaus, making a tenth division, manned from the transports, were under the conduct of Lieutenant *Bristow*, an assistant agent.

"Early in the morning of the 22d, the covering ships took their station in *Gravesend-Bay*. The Light-Infantry, with the reserve, to be first landed, forming a corps together of four thousand men, entered the boats at *Staten-Island* the same time. The transports in which the several brigades composing the second debarkation (about five thousand men) had been before embarked, were moved down and suitably arranged without the covering ships by eight o'clock. The first debarkation not meeting with any opposition, the second succeeded immediately after; and the other transports, carrying the rest of the troops, following the former in proper succession. The whole force then destined for this service, consisting of about fifteen thousand men, was landed before noon.

"On the 25th, an additional corps of *Hessian* troops under General *Heister*, with their field artillery and baggage, were conveyed to *Gravesend Bay*.

"Being informed the next day, by General *Howe*, of his intentions to advance with the army that night to the enemy's lines, and of his wishes that some diversion might be attempted by the ships on this side, I gave direction to Sir *Peter Parker* for proceeding higher up in the channel towards the town of *New-York* next morning, with the *Asia*, *Renown*, *Preston*, (Commodore *Hotham* embarked in the *Phœnix*, having been left to carry on the service in *Gravesend-Bay*,) *Roebuck*, and *Repulse*, and to keep those ships in readiness for being employed as occasion might require; but the wind veering to the northward soon after the break of day, the ships could not be moved up to the distance

proposed; therefore, when the troops under General *Grant*, forming the left column of the Army, were seen to be engaged with the enemy in the morning, the *Roebuck*, Captain *Hammond*, leading the detached squadron, was the only ship that could fetch high enough to the northward to exchange a few random shot with the battery on *Red-Hook:* and the ebb making strongly down the river soon after, I ordered the signal to be shown for the squadron to anchor."

[*Force's American Archives*, vol. I, 1776, folio 1255.]

[No. 24.]

[The following official report of the battle was written by Gen. Wm. Howe at the Brettonerre farm-house in the village of Newtown, L. I., and addressed to Lord George Germaine.]

Camp at Newtown, Long Island, September 3, 1776.

My Lord: On the 22d of last month, in the morning, the *British*, with Colonel *Donop's* corps of Chasseurs and *Hessian* Grenadiers, disembarked near *Utrecht* on *Long Island* without opposition, the whole being landed, with forty pieces of cannon, in two hours and a half, under the direction of Commodore *Hotham* — Lieutenant-General *Clinton* commanding the first division of the troops.

The enemy had only small parties on the coast, who, upon the approach of the boats, retired to the woody heights, commanding a principal pass on the road from *Flatbush* to their works at *Brooklyn*. Lord *Cornwallis* was immediately detached to *Flatbush* with the reserve, (two battalions of Light-Infantry, and Colonel *Donop's* Corps, with six field-pieces,) having orders not to risk an attack

upon the pass if he should find it occupied: which proving to be the case, his Lordship took post in the village, and the Army extended from the ferry at the *Narrows*, through *Utrecht* and *Gravesend*, to the village of *Flatland*.

On the 25th, Lieutenant-General *DeHeister*, with two brigades of *Hessians* from *Staten-Island*, joined the Army, leaving one brigade of his troops, a detachment of the Fourteenth Regiment from *Virginia*, some convalescents and recruits, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel *Dalrymple*, for the security of that Island.

On the 26th, Lieutenant-General *De Heister* took post at *Flatbush*, and in the evening Lord *Cornwallis* with the *British* drew off to Flatland. About nine o'clock the same night, the van of the Army, commanded by Lieutenant-General *Clinton*, consisting of the Light-Dragoons and brigade of Light-Infantry, the reserve under the command of Lord *Cornwallis*, excepting the Forty-Second Regiment, which was posted to the left of the *Hessians*, the First Brigade and the Seventy-First Regiment, with fourteen field-pieces, began to move from *Flatland* across the country through the new lots, to seize a path in the heights, extending from east to west, along the middle of the Island, and about three miles from *Bedford*, on the road to *Jamaica*, in order to turn the enemy's left posted at Flatbush.

August 27.—General *Clinton* being arrived within half a mile of the pass about two hours before daybreak, halted, and settled his disposition for the attack. One of his patrols, falling in with a patrol of the enemy's officers, took them; and the General, learning from their information that the Rebels had not occupied the pass, detached a battalion of Light-Infantry to secure it; and advancing with his corps upon the first appearance of day, possessed himself of the heights with such a disposition as must have insured success, had he found the enemy in force to oppose him.

The main body of the Army, consisting of the guards, Second, Third, and Fifth Brigades, with ten field-pieces, led by Lord *Percy*, marched soon after General *Clinton*, and halted an hour before day in his rear. This column (the country not admitting of two columns of march) was followed by the Forty-Ninth Regiment, with four medium twelve-pounders, and the baggage closed the rear with separate guard.

As soon as these corps had passed the heights, they halted for the soldiers to take a little refreshment, after which the march was continued, and about half an hour past eight o'clock, having got to *Bedford*, in the rear of the enemy's left, the attack was commenced by the Light-Infantry and Light-Dragoons upon large bodies of the Rebels, having cannon, who were quitting the woody heights before mentioned to return to their lines, upon discovering the march of the Army; instead of which they were drove back, and the Army still moving on to gain the enemy's rear, the Grenadiers and Thirty-Third Regiment, being in front of the column, soon approached within musket-shot of the enemy's lines at *Brooklyn*, from whence these battalions, without regarding the fire of cannon and small-arms upon them, pursued numbers of the Rebels, that were retiring from the heights so close to their principal redoubt, and with such eagerness to attack it by storm, that it required repeated orders to prevail upon them to desist from the attempt. Had they been permitted to go on, it is my opinion they would have carried the redoubt; but as it was apparent that the lines must have been ours at a very cheap rate by regular approaches, I would not risk the loss that might have been sustained in the assault, and ordered them back to a hollow way in the front of the works, out of the reach of musketry.

Lieutenant-General *De Heister* began soon after day break to cannonade the enemy in the front, and, upon the

approach of our right, ordered Colonel *Donop's* corps to advance to the attack of the hill, following himself at the head of the brigades. The Light-Infantry, about that time having been reinforced by the light company, the Grenadier company, and two other companies of the Guards, who joined them with the greatest activity and spirit, had taken three pieces of cannon, and were warmly engaged with very superior numbers in the woods, when, on the *Hessians* advancing, the enemy gave way, and was entirely routed in that quarter. On the left Major-General *Grant*, having the Fourth and Sixth Brigades, the Forty-Second Regiment, and two companies of *New-York* Provincials, raised by Governour *Tryon* in the spring, advanced along the coast with ten pieces of cannon, to divert the enemy's attention from their left. About midnight, he fell in with their advanced parties, and at daybreak, with a large corps, having cannon, and advantageously posted, with whom there was skirmishing and a cannonade for some hours, until, by the firing at *Brooklyn*, the Rebels, suspecting their retreat would be cut off, made a movement to the right, in order to secure it across a swamp and creek that covered the right of their works; but being met in their way by a part of the Second Grenadiers, who were soon after supported by the Seventy-First Regiment, and General *Grant's* left coming up, they suffered considerably: numbers of them, however, did get into the morass, where many were suffocated or drowned.

The force of the enemy detached from the lines where General *Putnam* commanded was not less, from the best accounts I have had, than ten thousand men, who were under the orders of Major-General *Sullivan*, Brigadier-Generals Lord *Stirling* and Udell. Their loss is computed at about three thousand three hundred killed, wounded, prisoners, and drowned, with five field-pieces and one howitzer taken. A return of the prisoners is enclosed.

On the part of the King's troops, five officers and fifty-six non-commissioned officers and rank and file killed; twelve officers and two hundred and forty-five non-commissioned officers and rank and file wounded; one officer and twenty Grenadiers of the Marines taken by mistaking the enemy for the *Hessians*.

The *Hessians* had two privates killed, three officers and twenty-three rank and file *wounded*. The wounds are in general very slight. *Lieutenant-Colonel Monckton* is shot through the body, but there are the greatest hopes of his recovery.

The behavior of both officers and soldiers, *British* and *Hessians*, was highly to their honour. More determined courage and steadiness in troops have never been experienced, or a greater ardour to distinguish themselves, as all those who had an opportunity have amply evinced by their actions.

In the evening of the 27th, the Army encamped in front of the enemy's works. On the 28th, at night, broke ground six hundred yards distant from a redoubt upon their left, and on the 29th, at night, the Rebels evacuated their intrenchments and *Red-Hook*, with the utmost silence, and quitted *Governour's Island* the following evening, leaving their cannon and a quantity of stores in all their works. At daybreak on the 30th, their flight was discovered, the piquets of the line took possession, and those most advanced reached the shore opposite to *New-York* as their rear guard was going over, and fired some shot amongst them.

The enemy is still in possession of the town and island of *New York*, in force, and making demonstration of opposing us in their works on both sides of *King's Bridge*. The inhabitants of this Island, many of whom had been forced into rebellion, have all submitted, and are ready to take the oaths of allegiance.

This dispatch will be delivered to your Lordship by Major *Cuyler*, my first Aid-de-camp, who, I trust, will be able to give your Lordship such further information as may be required.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

WILL. HOWE.

P. S. I have omitted to take notice, in its proper place, of a movement made by the King's ships towards the town on the 27th, at daybreak, with a view of drawing off the attention of the enemy from our real design, which, I believe, effectually answered the intended purpose.

[*Am. Archives*, vol. I, 5th Series, folio 1256.]

[No. 25.]

General Washington to the President of Congress. (*Read September 2d*, 1776).

New-York, August 31, 1776.

SIR: Inclination as well as duty would have induced me to give Congress the earliest information of my removal, and that of the troops, from *Long-Island* and its dependencies to this city the night before last; but the extreme fatigue which myself and family have undergone, as much from the weather since as the engagement on the 27th, rendered me and them entirely unfit to take pen in hand. Since *Monday*, scarce any of us have been out of the lines till our passage across the *East River* was effected yesterday morning; and for forty-eight hours preceding that, I had hardly been off my horse, and never closed my eyes, so that I was quite unfit to write or dictate till this morning.

Our retreat was made without any loss of men or ammunition, and in better order than I expected from the troops in the situation ours were. We brought off our cannon and stores, except a few heavy pieces, which, in the condition the earth was, by a long-continued rain, we found, upon trial, impracticable; the wheels of the carriages sinking up to the hubs, rendered it impossible for our whole force to drag them. We left but little provisions on the Island, except some cattle, which had been driven within our lines, and which, after many attempts to force across the water, we found impossible to effect, circumstanced as we were.

I have enclosed a copy of the Council of War, held previous to the retreat, to which I beg leave to refer Congress for the reasons, or many of them, that led to the adoption of that measure.

Yesterday evening and last night a party of our men were employed in bringing our horses, cannon, tents, &c., from Governour's Island, which they nearly completed. Some of the heavy cannon remain there still, but I expect will be got away to-day.

In the engagement on the 27th Generals *Sullivan* and *Stirling* were made prisoners; the former has been permitted, on his parole, to return for a little time. From my Lord *Stirling* I had a letter by General *Sullivan*, a copy of which I have the honour to transmit. That contains his information of the engagement with his brigade. It is not so full and certain as I could wish; he was hurried most probably, as his letter was unfinished. Nor have I been yet able to obtain an exact account of our loss; we suppose it from seven hundred to one thousand killed and taken.

General *Sullivan* says Lord *Howe* is extremely desirous of seeing some of the members of Congress, for which purpose he was allowed to come out, and to communicate to

them what has passed between him and his Lordship. I have consented to his going to *Philadelphia*, as I did not mean, or conceive it right, to withhold or prevent him from giving such information as he possesses in this instance.

I am much hurried, and engaged in arranging and making new dispositions of our forces; the movement of the enemy requiring them to be immediately had; and therefore have only time to add, that I am, with my best regards to Congress, their and your most obedient, humble servant,

GO. WASHINGTON.

[*American Archives*, 5th Series, fol. 1244. vol. I.]

Gen. Washington to the New York Convention.

New York, Aug. 30, 1776.

SIR: Your favor of this date is just come to hand. Circumstanced as this Army was, in respect to situation, strength, &c., it was the unanimous advice of a council of General Officers to give up *Long-Island* and not, by dividing our force, be unable to resist the enemy in any one point of attack. This reason, added to some others, particularly the fear of having our communication cut off from the main, (of which there seemed no small probability,) and the extreme fatigue our troops were laid under in guarding such extensive lines without proper shelter from the weather, induced the above resolution.

It is the most intricate thing in the world, sir, to know in what manner to conduct one's self with respect to the Militia: if you do not begin many days before they are wanted, to raise them, you cannot have them in time; if you do, they get tired and return, besides being under but very little order or government whilst in service. However, if the enemy have a design of serving us at this place

as we apprehend they meant to do on *Long-Island*, it might not be improper to have a body in readiness to prevent or retard a landing of them, on the east of *Harlem River*, if need be.

In haste, and not a little fatigued, I remain, with great respect and esteem, sir, your most obedient humble servant

GO. WASHINGTON.

To the Hon. Abm. Yates, Jun., Esq., President, &c.

[*Ibid.*, fol. 1230.]

[No. 26.]

Account of Battle, and the Loss of the Maryland Battalion, by Col. Smallwood.

Camp of the Maryland Regulars, Head-Quarters, Oct. 12, 1776.

SIR: Through your hands I must beg leave to address the honourable Convention of *Maryland*, and must confess not without an apprehension that I have incurred their displeasure for having omitted writing when on our march from *Maryland* for *New-York*, and since our arrival here. Nor shall I, in a pointed manner, urge anything in my defence, but leave them at large to condemn or excuse me, upon a presumption that, should they condemn, they will at least pardon, and judge me perhaps less culpable when they reflect, in the first instance, on the exertions necessary to procure baggage-wagons, provisions, and house-room for seven hundred and fifty men, marched the whole distance in a body, generally from fifteen to twenty miles per day, as the several stages made it necessary; and in the latter I trust they will give some indulgence for this neglect, for, since our arrival at *New-York*, it has been

the fate of this corps to be generally stationed at advanced posts, and to act as a covering party, which must unavoidably expose troops to extraordinary duty and hazard, not to mention the extraordinary vigilance and attention in the commandant of such a party in disposing in the best manner, and having it regularly supplied; for here the commanders of regiments, exclusive of their military duty, are often obliged to exert themselves in the departments of Commissary and Quarter-master-General, and even directors of their Regimental Hospitals.

Perhaps it may not be improper to give a short detail of occurrences upon our march to *Long-Island*, and since that period.

The enemy, from the 21st to the 27th of *August*, were landing their troops on the lower part of *Long-Island*, where they pitched a large encampment, and ours and their advanced parties were daily skirmishing at long-shot, in which neither party suffered much. On the 26th, the *Maryland* and *Delaware* troops, which composed part of Lord *Stirling's* brigade, were ordered over. Colonel *Haslet* and his Lieutenant-Colonel, *Bedford*, of the *Delaware* battalion, with Lieutenant-Colonel *Hare* and myself, were detained on the trial of Lieutenant-Colonel *Zedwitz;* and though I waited on General *Washington*, and urged the necessity of attending our troops, yet he refused to discharge us, alleging there was a necessity for the trials coming on, and that no other Field Officers could be then had. After our dismission from the Court-Martial, it was too late to get over, but, pushing over early the next morning, found our regiments engaged, Lord *Stirling* having marched them off before day to take possession of the the woods and difficult passes between our lines and the enemy's encampment. But the enemy, the overnight, had stole a march on our Generals, having got through those passes, met and surrounded our troops on the plain

grounds, within two miles of our lines. Lord *Stirling* drew up his brigade on an advantageous rising ground, where he was attacked by two brigades in front, headed by the Generals *Cornwallis* and *Grant*, and in his rear the enemy's main body stood ready drawn up to support their own parties, and intercept the retreat of ours. This excellent disposition, and their superior numbers, ought to have taught our Generals there was no time to be lost in securing their retreat, which might at first have been effected, had the troops formed into a heavy column and pushed their retreat; but the longer this was delayed, it became the more dangerous, as they were then landing more troops in front from the ships. Our brigade kept their ground for several hours, and in general behaved well, having received some heavy fires from the artillery and musketry of the enemy whom they repulsed several times; but their attacks were neither so lasting or vigorous as was expected, owing, as it was imagined, to their being certain of making the whole brigade prisoners of war; for, by this time, they had so secured the passes on the road to our lines, (seeing our parties were not supported from thence, which indeed, our numbers would not admit of,) that there was no possibility of retreating that way. Between the place of action and our lines there lay a large marsh and deep creek, not above eighty yards across at the mouth, (the place of action upon a direct line did not much exceed a mile from a part of our lines,) towards the head of which creek there was a mill and bridge, across which a certain Colonel *Ward*, from *New-England*, who is charged with having acted a bashful part that day, passed over with his regiment, and then burnt them down, though under cover of our cannon, which would have checked the enemy's pursuit at any time, otherways this bridge might have afforded a secure retreat. There then remained no other prospect but to surrender or attempt to retreat over this

marsh and creek at the mouth, where no person had ever been known to cross. In the interim I applied to General *Washington* for some regiments to march out to support and cover their retreat, which he urged would be attended with too great risk to the party and the lines. He immediately afterwards sent for and ordered me to march down a *New England* regiment, and Captain *Thomas's* company, which had just come over from *York*, to the mouth of the Creek, opposite where the brigade was drawn up, and ordered two field-pieces down to support and cover their retreat, should they make a push that way. Soon after our march they began to retreat, and, for a small time, the fire was very heavy on both sides, till our troops came to the marsh, where they were obliged to break their order, and escape, as quick as they could, to the edge of the creek, under a brisk fire, notwithstanding which they brought off twenty-eight prisoners. The enemy taking advantage of a commanding ground, kept up a continual fire from four field-pieces, which were well served and directed, and an heavy column advancing on the marsh must have cut our people off: their guns being wet and muddy, not one of them could have fired; but having drawn up the musketry, and disposed of some Riflemen conveniently, with orders to fire on them when they came within shot, however, the latter began their fire too soon, being at two hundred yards distance, which, notwithstanding, had the desired effect, for the enemy immediately retreated to the fast land, where they continued parading within six hundred yards till our troops were brought over. Most of those who swam over, and others who attempted to cross before the covering party got down, lost their arms and accoutrements in the mud and creek, and some poor fellows their lives, particularly, two of the *Maryland*, two of the *Delaware*, one of *Atlee's Pennsylvania*, and two Hessian prisoners, were drowned. *Thomas's* men

contributed much in bringing over this party. Have enclosed a list of the killed and missing, amounting to two hundred and fifty-six, officers included. It has been said the enemy, during the action, also attacked our lines, but this was a mistake. Not knowing the ground, one of their columns advanced within long shot without knowing they were so near, and upon our artillery and part of the musketry's firing on them, they immediately fled.

The 28th, during a very hard rain, there was an alarm that the enemy had advanced to attack our lines, which alarmed the troops much, but was without foundation.

The 29th, it was found, by a council of war, that our fortifications were not tenable, and it was therefore judged expedient that the army should retreat from the island that night; to effect which, notwithstanding the *Maryland* troops had had but one day's respite, and many other troops had been many days clear of any detail duty, they were ordered on the advanced post at *Fort Putnam*, within two-hundred and fifty yards of the enemy's approaches, and, joined with two *Pennsylvania* regiments on the left, were to remain and cover the retreat of the army, which was happily completed under cover of a thick fog and a southwest wind, both which favored our retreat; otherwise the fear, disorder, and confusion of some of the Eastern troops must have retarded and discovered our retreat, and subjected numbers to be cut off.

After remaining two days in *New-York*, our next station was at *Harlaem*, nine miles above, at an advanced post opposite to *Montresore's* and *Bohana's* Islands, which in a few days the enemy got possession of without opposition, from the former of which we daily discoursed with them, being within two hundred yards, and only a small creek between.

It being judged expedient to abandon *New-York*, and retreat to our lines below *Fort Washington*, the military

stores, &c., had been removing some days, when, on the 15th *September*, the enemy effected a landing on several parts of the island below, and, it is cutting to say, without the least opposition.

I have often read and heard of instances of cowardice, but hitherto have had but a faint idea of it till now. I never could have thought human nature subject to such baseness. I could wish the transactions of this day blotted out of the annals of *America*. Nothing appeared but fright, disgrace, and confusion. Let it suffice to say, that sixty Light-Infantry, upon the first fire, put to flight two brigades of the *Connecticut* troops — wretches who, however strange it may appear, from the Brigadier-General down to the private sentinel, were caned and whipped by the Generals *Washington*, *Putnam*, and *Mifflin*, but even this indignity had no weight, they could not be brought to stand one shot.

General *Washington* expressly sent and drew our regiment from its brigade, to march down towards *New-York*, to cover the retreat, and to defend the baggage * * *

I am, very respectfully, your obedient and very humble servant,

W. Smallwood.

To the Hon. Matthew Tilghman, Esq., President Convention of *Maryland*.

[*American Archives*, vol. II, 5th Series, folio 1011.]

[No. 27.]

Colonel Haslet to Thomas Rodney.

Camp at Mount Washington, October 4, 1776.

On *Sunday*, the 25th of *August* last, my regiment was ordered to *Long-Island*, in Lord *Stirling's* brigade, composed

mostly of the Southern troops, by whom we were much caressed, and highly complimented on our appearance and dexterity in the military exercise and manœuvres. On *Tuesday*, the 27th, his brigade, consisting of five regiments, and a few of *Sullivan's*, not exceeding five thousand men, were ordered to advance beyond the lines and repulse the enemy. To oppose this small band were seventeen thousand regulars, much better furnished with field-pieces and every other military appointment than we. Several of the regiments were broken and dispersed soon after the first onset. The *Delawares* and *Marylanders* stood firm to the last; and after a variety of skirmishing, the *Delawares* drew up on the side of a hill, and stood upwards of four hours, with a firm, determined countenance, in close array, their colours flying, the enemy's artillery playing on them all the while, not daring to advance and attack them, though six times their number, and nearly surrounding them. Nor did they think of quitting their station till an express order from the General commanded their retreat through a marsh and over a creek, the only opening left, which they effected in good order, with the loss of one man drowned in passing. The *Delawares* alone had the honor of bringing off twenty-three prisoners.

I must also do Colonel *Smallwood's* battalion the justice to say, that the spirited attack made by them on the enemy, at the time the *Delawares* and themselves were retreating, greatly facilitated the escape of both. Twenty-seven of the *Delawares* next morning were missing. In that number were Lieutenants *Stewart* and *Harney;* the latter a prisoner, the other not yet heard of. Major *McDonough* was wounded in the knee; a ball passed through the sleeve of his coat without wounding the arm or his body. Lieutenant *Anderson* had a ball lodged in his throat; Lieutenant *Corn* a ball still in his back; they are recovered. The standard was torn with shot in Ensign

Stephens's hand, who is now in his element, and a most excellent officer. Such is our fate. The *Delaware* battalion, officers and men, are respected throughout this army. We are now in General *Mifflin's* brigade, who a few days since was appointed Quartermaster-General, and by special order we encamp on the lines, near the General's house. In the retreat from *Long-Island*, which was conducted with great prudence, Colonels *Shee*, *Smallwood*, *Hand*, and some others I do not recollect, were called into Council, and requested to take the defence of the lines upon us, while the main body of the army crossed the *East River* to *New York*, which was accepted; and last of all crossed ourselves, thank God, in safety.

[*American Archives*, vol. II, 5th Series, folio 881.]

[No. 28.]

Colonel Harrison to the President of Congress.

New-York, August 27, 1776, eight o'clock, P. M.

SIR: I this minute returned from our lines on *Long-Island* where I left his Excellency the General. From him I have it in command to inform Congress that yesterday he went there, and continued till evening, when, from the enemy's having landed a considerable part of their forces, and many of their movements, there was reason to apprehend they would make, in a little time, a general attack. As they would have a wood to pass through before they could approach the lines, it was thought expedient to place a number of men there, on the different roads leading from whence they were stationed, in order to harass and

annoy them in their march. This being done, early this morning a smart engagement ensued between the enemy and our detachments, which being unequal to the force they had to contend with, have sustained a pretty considerable loss: at least many of our men are missing. Among those that have not returned are General *Sullivan* and Lord *Stirling*. The enemy's loss is not known certainly; but we are told by such of our troops that were in the engagement and that have come in, that they had many killed and wounded. Our party brought off a Lieutenant, Sergeant, and Corporal, with twenty privates, prisoners. While these detachments were engaged, a column of the enemy descended from the woods and marched towards the centre of our lines, with a design to make an impression, but were repulsed. This evening they appeared very numerous about the skirts of the woods, where they have pitched several tents, and his Excellency inclines to think they mean to attack and force us from our lines by way of regular approaches, rather than in any other manner.

To-day five ships of the line came up towards the town, where they seemed desirous of getting, as they turned a long time against an unfavorable wind. And on my return this evening, I found a deserter from the Twenty-Third Regiment, who informed me that they design, as soon as the wind will permit 'em to come up, to give us a severe cannonade and to silence our batteries, if possible.

I have the honour to be, in great haste, sir, your most obedient,

ROB. H. HARRISON.

(Same to General *Mercer*.)

[*American Archives*, 5th Series, fol. 1183, vol. I.]

[No. 29.]

Lord Stirling to General Washington.

Eagle, August 29, 1776.

My Dear General: I have now an opportunity of informing you of what has happened to me since I had last the pleasure of seeing you. About three o'clock on the morning of the 27th I was called up, and informed by General *Putnam* that the enemy were advancing on the road from *Flatbush* to the *Red Lyon*, and ordered me to march with the two regiments nearest at hand to meet them; these happened to be *Haslet's* and *Smallwood's*, with which I accordingly marched, and was on the road to the *Narrows*, just as the day-light began to appear. We proceeded to within about half a mile of the *Red Lyon*, and there met Colonel *Atlee* with his regiment, who informed me that the enemy were in sight; indeed I then saw their front between us and the *Red Lyon*. I desired Colonel Atlee to place his regiment on the left of the road, and wait their coming up, while I went to form the two regiments I had brought with me, along the ridge from the road up to a piece of wood on the top of the hill; this was done instantly on very advantageous ground. Our opponents advanced and were fired upon in the road by *Atlee's*, who, after two or three rounds, retreated to the wood on my left, and there formed. By this time *Kichline's* Riflemen arrived; part of them I placed along a hedge under the front of the hill, and the rest in the front of the wood. The troops opposed to me were two brigades, of four regiments each, under the command of General *Grant*, who advanced their light troops to within one hundred and fifty yards of our right front, and took possession of an orchard there, and some hedges which extended towards our left; this

brought on an exchange of fire between those troops and our Riflemen, which continued for about two hours, and then ceased by those light troops retiring to their main body. In the mean time Captain *Carpenter* brought up two field pieces, which were placed on the side of the hill so as to command the road, and the only approach for some hundred yards. On the part of General *Grant* there were two field-pieces; one howitz advanced to within three hundred yards of the front of our right, and a like detachment of artillery to the front of our left, on a rising ground at about six hundred yards distance. One of their brigades formed in two lines opposite to our right, and the others extended in one line to top of the hills in the front of our left; in this position we stood cannonading each other till near eleven o'clock, when I found that General *Howe*, with the main body of the Army, was between me and our lines, and saw that the only chance of escaping being all made prisoners was to pass the creek near the *Yellow Mills;* and in order to render this the more practicable, I found it absolutely necessary to attack a body of troops commanded by Lord *Cornwallis*, posted at the house near the *Upper Mills;* this I instantly did, with about half of *Smallwood's*, first ordering all the other troops to make the best of their way through the creek. We continued the attack a considerable time, the men having been rallied and the attack renewed five or six several times, and were on the point of driving Lord *Cornwallis* from his station, but large succours arriving rendered it impossible to do more than to provide for safety. I endeavored to get in between that house and *Fort Box*, but on attempting it I found a considerable body of troops in my front, and several in pursuit of me on the right and left, and a constant firing on me. I immediately turned the point of a hill which covered me from their fire, and I was soon out of the reach of my pursuers. I soon found it would be in vain to attempt

to make my escape, and therefore went to surrender myself to General *De Heister*, commander-in-chief of the *Hessians*.

[*American Archives*, 5th Series, fol. 1245, vol. I.]

[No. 30.]

Account of Col. Reed.

New York, August 30, 1776.

Colonel Reed to General William Livingston.

Dear Sir: Though I am much fatigued, not having had my clothes off since *Monday* evening, and no sleep for two nights, I sit down cheerfully to comply with your request. On General *Greene's* being sick, *Sullivan* took the command, who was wholly unacquainted with the ground or country. Some movements being made which the General did not approve entirely, and finding a great force going to *Long-Island*, he sent over *Putnam*, who had been over occasionally; this gave some disgust, so that *Putnam* was directed to soothe and soften as much as possible. In this condition things were, and growing more critical. Lord *Stirling* went over; some regiments were also sent; they were ordered to lay in a wood near *Flatbush*, but the road from *Jamaica* having been neglected, they were surprised on *Tuesday* morning. The picket of eight hundred men, I fear, mostly ran off at the first fire, but several regiments being ordered out, and ignorant of the Jamaica rout, as soon as they engaged they found themselves surrounded, so that they were obliged to cut their way through. Many of them behaved well, and have suffered accordingly. Our loss I compute at seven hundred men, two General

Officers, (*Sullivan* and *Stirling*), nine Colonels and Lieutenant-Colonels, two or three Majors, and several other officers. The two first are prisoners, and well used. We had a letter from *Sullivan* yesterday. Colonels killed and missing are *Atlee*, *Miles*, *Piper*, *Parry*, (killed;) Lieutenant-Colonel *Johnson*, *Lutz*, *Kachlin*, *Clark*, Major *Burd*, and one or two I don't.

The principal loss has fallen on First *Pennsylvania* battalion, *Atlee*, *Smallwood*, *Huntington*, and *Haslett's;* all of whom behaved so as to command the admiration of all those who beheld the engagement. My Lord, who loved discipline, made a mistake, which probably affected us a great deal; he would not suffer his regiments to break, but kept them in lines and on open ground. The enemy, on the other hand, possessed themselves of the woods, fences, &c., and having the advantage of numbers, perhaps ten to one, our troops lost everything but honour. His personal bravery was very conspicuous. As this wood made a capital part of the *Long-Island* defence, and Lord *Howe* was every day attempting, with the wind ahead, to get up to town, it became a serious consideration whether we ought to risk the fate of the Army, and perhaps *America*, on defending the circle of about three miles, fortified with a few strong redoubts, but chiefly open lines. When the heavy rains came on not half of the men had tents; they lay out in the lines, their arms, ammunition, &c., all got wet; they began to sink under the fatigues and hardships. The enemy at the same time possessed themselves of a piece of ground very advantageous, and which they had . We were therefore reduced to the alternative of retiring to this place, or going out with to drive them off; it was unanimously agreed to retire, and measures taken to execute it, which was done in the face of their Army, so effectually that between sunset and sunrise our men, ammunition, all our artillery, (except five pieces

of heavy cannon,) the greater part of our prisoners, were got off undiscovered and safely landed here. We shall now therefore have our whole strength collected together, and govern ourselves accordingly. We took thirty prisoners and one officer from the enemy, and have reason to think their loss also considerable. In General *Sullivan's* note, he says Lord *Stirling* will be exchanged for either of their Brigadiers, from which we suppose two are killed, as they are not in our hands. A Sergeant brought in a laced hat, shot through, and the name of Colonel *Grant* wrote in it, from which we suppose he is certainly killed, and may be General *Grant* since promoted.

I have given you the substance, and I believe it is pretty exact.

I am, with great truth and esteem, &c., your most obedient, humble servant,

JOS. REED.

[*American Archives*, 5th Series, fol. 1231, vol. I.]

[No. 31.]

Letter from Lieut. Col. James Chambers of Col. Hand's Battalion of Riflemen, descriptive of the Battle of the 27th of August.

In camp at Delamere's Mills,
three miles above King's Bridge, September 3, 1776.

MY DEAR KITTY: I should have written to you sooner, but the hurry and confusion we have been in for some time past, has hindered me. I will now give you a short account of transactions in this quarter.

On the morning of the 22nd of August there were nine thousand British troops on New Utrecht plains. The guard alarmed our small camp, and we assembled at the

flagstaff. We marched our forces, about two hundred in number, to New Utrecht, to watch the movements of the enemy. When we came on the hill, we discovered a party of them advancing toward us. We prepared to give them a warm reception, when an imprudent fellow fired, and they immediately halted and turned toward Flatbush. The main body also, moved along the great road toward the same place. We proceeded alongside of them in the edge of the woods as far as the turn of the lane, where the cherry trees were, if you remember. We then found it impracticable for so small a force to attack them on the plain, and sent Captain Hamilton with twenty men, before them to burn all the grain; which he did very cleverly, and killed a great many cattle. It was then thought most proper to return to camp and secure our baggage, which we did, and left it in Fort Brown. Near 12 o'clock the same day we returned down the great road to Flatbush with only our small regiment and one New England regiment sent to support us, though at a mile's distance. When in sight of Flatbush, we discovered the enemy, but not the main body; on perceiving us, they retreated down the road perhaps a mile. A party of our people commanded by Captain Miller followed them close with a design to decoy a portion of them to follow him, whilst the rest kept in the edge of the woods alongside of Captain M. But they thought better of the matter and would not come after him though he went within two hundred yards. There they stood for a long time, and then Cap. Miller turned off to us, and we proceeded along their flank.

Some of our men fired upon and killed several Hessians, as we ascertained two days afterwards. Strong guards were maintained all day on the flanks of the enemy, and our regiment and the Hessian yagers kept up a severe firing with a loss of but two wounded on our side. We laid a few Hessians low, and made them retreat out of Flatbush.

Our people went into the town, and brought the goods out of the burning houses.

The enemy liked to have lost their field-pieces. Captain Steel, of your vicinity, acted bravely. We would certainly have had the cannon had it not been for some foolish person calling retreat. The main body of the foe returned to the town; and when our lads came back, they told of their exploits. This was doubted by some, which enraged our men so much that a few of them ran and brought away several Hessians on their backs. This kind of firing by our riflemen and theirs continued until ten (two?) o'clock in the morning of the 26th, when our regiment was relieved by a portion of the Flying Camp; and we started for Fort Greene to get refreshment, not having lain down the whole of this time, and almost dead with fatigue. We had just got to the fort, and I had only laid down, when the alarm guns were fired. We were compelled to turn out to the lines, and as soon as it was light saw our men and theirs engaged with field-pieces. At last, the enemy found means to surround our men there upon guard, and then a heavy firing continued for several hours. The main body that surrounded our men marched up within thirty yards of Forts Brown and Greene; but when we fired, they retreated with loss. From all I can learn we numbered about twenty-five hundred, and the attacking party not less than twenty-five thousand, as they had been landing for days before. Our men behaved as bravely as men ever did; but it is surprising that, with the superiority of numbers, they were not cut to pieces. They behaved gallantly, and there are but five or six hundred missing.

General Lord Stirling fought like a wolf, and is taken prisoner. Colonels Miles and Atlee, Major Bird, Captain Peoples, Lieutenant Watt, and a great number of our other officers also prisoners; Colonel Piper missing. From deserters, we learn that the enemy lost Major-Gene-

ral Grant, and two Brigadiers, and many others, and five hundred killed. Our loss is chiefly in prisoners. * * * The Pennsylvania troops were done great honor by being chosen the *corpsderescrve* to cover the retreat. The regiments of Colonels Hand, Hagan, Shea, and Hazlett were detailed for that purpose. We kept up fires, with outposts stationed, until all the rest were over. We left the lines after it was fair day, and then came off.

Never was a greater feat of generalship shown than in this retreat; to bring off an army of twelve thousand men within sight of a strong enemy, possessed of as strong a fleet as ever floated on our seas, without any loss, and saving all the baggage.

General Washington saw the last over himself.

[*Chambersburg in the Colony and the Revolution.*]

[No. 32.]

Account of the Massacre by a British officer.

[Extract of a letter from an officer in General Frazier's Battalion.]

Dated September 3d, 1776.

Rejoice, my friend, that we have given the Rebels a d——d crush. We landed on *Long-Island* the 22d ult., without opposition. On the 27th we had a very warm action, in which the *Scots* regiments behaved with the greatest bravery, and carried the day after an obstinate resistance on the Rebel side. But we flanked and overpowered them with numbers. The *Hessians* and our brave *Highlanders* gave no quarters, and it was a fine sight to see with what alacrity they dispatched the Rebels with their bayonets after we had surrounded them so that they could not resist. Multitudes were drowned and suffocated in

morasses — a proper punishment for all Rebels. Our battalion outmarched all the rest, and was always first up with the Rebel fugitives. A fellow they call Lord *Stirling*, one of their Generals, with two others, is prisoner, and a great many of their officers, men, artillery, and stores. It was a glorious achievement, my friend, and will immortalize us and crush the Rebel Colonies. Our loss was nothing. We took care to tell the *Hessians* that the Rebels had resolved to give no quarters to them in particular, which made them fight desperately, and put all to death that fell into their hands. You know all stratagems are lawful in war, especially against such vile enemies to their King and country. The Island is all ours, and we shall soon take *New-York*, for the Rebels dare not look us in the face. I expect the affair will be over this campaign, and we shall all return covered with *American* laurels, and have the cream of American lands allotted us for our services.

[Lest any of those persons who affect not to believe anything against the *British* soldiers, and will pretend to say that the above letter, which exactly tallies with their conduct as heretofore represented, is an *American* forgery, we would inform them that the *English* paper from whence the above is taken may be seen in the hands of the printers in *Hartford — Mass. Spy.*]

[*American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, fol. 1259.]

[No. 33.]

Maryland Council of Safety to Delegate in Congress [*at Philadelphia.*]

Annapolis, August 16, 1776.

Sir: We received yours of the 13th, and have seen what you wrote to Major *Jenifer* on the state of publick affairs.

In consequence of a resolve of the Convention, we have given orders to all the Independent Companies (four in

number), to march. Colonel *Carvell Hall's* and Colonel Ewing's, and six or seven companies on the *Eastern Shore*, have like orders to march; so that, with *Griffith's* battalion, we shall have near four thousand men with you in a short time. This exceeds our proportion for the Flying-Camp, but we are sending all that we have that can be armed and equipped; and the people of New-York, for whom we have great affection, can have no more than our all. Enclosed you have a list of the several battalions and companies. * * * *

P. S. These companies are not all fully armed and equipped, but we hope *soon* to collect enough.

List of the Troops for Maryland.

Smallwood's Battalion nine Companies, 76 each, - -	684
Captain *Veazey*, 100, Captain *Hindman* 100, Captain *Thomas* 100, - - - - - - - -	300
Captain *Beall* 100, Captain *Gunby* 100, - - -	200
Captain *Woolford* 100, Captain *Watkins* 100, - -	200
	1384
Griffith's Battalion, nine Companies, 90 men each, -	810
Colonel *Carvel Hall's* do do - -	810
3 Companies of Colonel *Ewing's* - - - - -	270
7 Companies of *Eastern-Shore* Battalion, - - -	644
	3918

The remaining Companies of *Ewing's* and the *Eastern-Shore* Battalion must borrow arms from the Militia to do duty here; they can get arms on no other terms.

Maryland Committee of Safety to Captains Smith and Perkins.

Annapolis, August 16, 1776.

Gentlemen: By desire of the Convention you are to march your Companies, as soon as they are ready, to

Philadelphia, where you will receive further orders. The service requires the greatest despatch, and we earnestly request you to exert yourselves on this occasion. We have written the Committee to supply you with camp kettles, gun-slings, wooden bottles, and cartouch boxes.
* * *

[Subsequent orders indicate the greatest zeal and interest in defending New York from the common enemy. The generous and noble sons of Maryland responded to the call of the Convention with equal enthusiasm, and with the loftiest courage and patriotism devoted themselves to the cause of liberty, in which they perished.]

[American Archives, vol. I, 5th Series, fol. 975.]

[No. 34.]

Extract from a Journal kept by Captain George Harris, of the 5th Regiment of British Infantry. Subsequently Lord George Harris.

"On the 5th August we made the harbour of New York, and at the entrance joined the very fleet with which I had so much wished to sail, and of which ours in fact, was the second part. On the 18th I got quit of the recruits to my great satisfaction, and joined my company on Staten Island. About the 20th we embarked in boats for Long Island, and landed, without opposition, in Gravesend Bay; marched six miles inland, and halted till the 26th. A large body of the Americans near us keeping up a fire from behind walls and trees. About 4 P. M. of the 26th, struck tents, and lay on our arms during the night about three miles from Bedford; and though in summer, it was the coldest night I have experienced up to this time

(Nov. 25th). Such sudden changes of climate are not uncommon here. The weather is now most unnaturally hot and close, after severe frosts.

"At daybreak, the 27th, the light infantry attacked and forced several small posts which the Americans had on the road leading to their lines at Bedford. This appeared to be the first notice they had of our being near to them. About nine we fired two signal guns to a part of the army under General Grant, who was to make a feint in the front of the Americans, while we got round to their rear, and immediately marched briskly up to them, when, almost without firing a shot, they abandoned their post, and retreated to their lines under cover of their guns, (these they also evacuated two or three days after, retiring upon New York during the night). Our men were most eager to attack them in their lines, and I am convinced would have carried them, but we were ordered to retreat out of reach of their guns, and lay from about four P. M., till very near dark, at the entrance of a small wood, exposed to the fire of their riflemen. During the whole evening they hit but one man, though their balls continually whistled over our heads, and lodged in the trees above us. Their loss that day is acknowledged by them to have been above 2,600; ours about 300 in killed and wounded.

"On the 30th the reserve, with the light infantry, again left the army, which the next day took peaceable possession of all the American works on Long Island, and encamped near Hell Gate." * * *

[In a letter written nearly at the same period Captain Harris says of Col. Medows:]

"He led us on to action in the most gallant manner, and I am convinced that if Gen. Howe had made a sign for us to follow the Americans into their works we would have

done it. Thanks to the General's prudence we have effected this object without the loss of the many brave fellows who must have fallen in the attempt."

[*Lushington's Life and Services of Gen. Lord Harris.*]

[No. 35.]

Extract from an account of the landing and battle on Long Island, compiled by G. S. Rainer from the Journals and original papers of Sir George Collier, Commander of the Rainbow.

"Sir George Collier, in the Rainbow of 44 guns, Commodore Hotham, in the Preston of 50 guns, and four other men-of-war were appointed to escort this formidable force to America. The fleet having completed their water and provisions, and the wind admitting of their sailing, they left Spithead about the 20th of May, amounting in all to ninety-two sail, eighty-six of which were transports, and the rest men-of-war.

This first division consisted of 7,800 Hessians, and were commanded by Lieutenant-General *De Heister*, with some other General officers under him; together with a numerous and well-appointed train of artillery, wagons, field equipage, and every other necessary preparation for taking the field. To these were added 1,000 of the English guards, under Colonel Matthews, who, on the arrival of the Hessian troops at Spithead, immediately embarked in transports prepared for them.

The incidents of the voyage are little worth mentioning, except that some of the transports, by thick weather and other causes, separated from their convoy; the fogs on the

banks of Newfoundland making it very difficult for the fleet to keep together. This disagreeable impediment continued till they arrived off the coast of Nova Scotia, and it was then found, upon coming into *clear day light*, that about seventeen sail of the convoy were missing.

After the evacuation of Boston, our troops retired to Halifax, and it was expected they would remain at that settlement till joined by the reinforcements from England. Accordingly, this fleet pursued their voyage for Halifax, but were informed in coming off the harbour, that General Howe and his army had embarked from thence, and were gone to New York.

This was disagreeable news for the sick men, of whom there were already great numbers, and who, after a tedious and uncomfortable voyage of nine weeks, were in hopes of meeting with a little quiet and refreshment. The expectation, however, was illusive; for as the service would not admit of any delay, the fleet, without anchoring, turned their prows to the southward, and shaped a course for New York.

This passage was again very tedious, for calms contrary winds, and currents, drove the fleet in such adverse directions, as baffled every reckoning, though kept by the ablest artists. The old General, De Heister, who was embarked on board a merchant ship, exhausted his whole stock of *tobacco* and *patience* together. He wrote a letter, couched in terms of *grief*, *impatience*, and *despair*. "I have been imposed on and deceived," said the old veteran; "for I was assured the voyage would not exceed *six or seven weeks*,— it is now *more than fourteen* since I embarked, and full three months since I left England, yet I see no more prospect of landing than I did a week after our sailing. I am an old man, covered with wounds, and imbecilitated by age and fatigues, and it is impossible I should survive if the voyage continues *much longer*." Sir

George Collier went on board the transport, to visit and comfort the old General; and to do it more effectually than by words, he carried with him refreshments, fresh provisions, &c., but, above all, plenty of tobacco, which he learned was one principal cause of the veteran's dejection. This, and an assurance that the voyage would now *soon terminate*, raised the old German's spirits very effectually. He ordered his band of music to play, — he called for old Hock, and swallowed large potations to the healths of the King of England, the Landgrave, and many other friends, and Sir George left him perfectly exhilarated and happy.

After a passage of about thirteen weeks from England, the convoy arrived at Sandy Hook, where they found Lord Howe, who had taken upon him the command of the fleet. The army, under his brother, was encamped on Staten Island, within sight of the city of New York.

The Hessian troops were immediately disembarked, and formed a separate camp. The great plenty of refreshment they received, soon recovered them from the fatigues of their long voyage, and rendered them perfectly fit for service. General Howe had now the satisfaction of finding himself at the head of full twenty-four thousand fine troops, most completely furnished and appointed, commanded by the ablest and best officers in the world, and having a more numerous artillery than *ever before* was sent from England. Four hundred transports were anchored abreast of Staten Island, to carry them to any place the General might choose to attempt; and thirty-seven sail of men-of-war attended as a protection and escort, if it should be wanted. A force so tremendous by sea and land, struck terror into the breast of every rebel, and they gave up, *as hopeless*, that independence which they had the presumption to proclaim but a little before.

From the nearest part of Staten Island, the city of New York was distant about six miles. The rebels had thrown

up some trifling works on the different points of land leading up to it, but the channel was not intricate, and no one conceived that the dislodging them from the posts they had taken, and becoming masters of New York, would be attended with any great hazard or difficulty. Mr. Washington, (a gentleman of property in Virginia, who had formerly served in the American troops last war against the French), had the chief command of the rebel army, and took upon himself the title of General. The utmost of his collected force did not amount to sixteen thousand men, all of whom were *undisciplined*, *unused to war*, *deficient in clothing*, and even *necessaries*, and very *ill-provided* with artillery and ammunition. His officers were tradesmen of different professions, totally unacquainted with discipline, and consequently utterly *unskilled* in the art of war.

Such was the exact state of both armies before any operation was undertaken. *Justice* on the royal side, and *treason* on the other, made the balance still more unequal.

The season was already too far advanced to lose a moment from enterprise. The troops panted with the most gallant ardour to be led on to action; the men-of-war were impatiently anxious to attack the rebel batteries, (believing the traitors who were to defend them, would soon give up the point,) and longing to tear down and trample upon the *thirteen stripes*, which were seen insolently waving on bastions in many different places.

Six fire-ships appeared at this time under the walls of New-York, menacing the fleet at Staten Island. Had they attempted burning the transports in some dark night, when the wind and tide were favourable, much *damage and confusion* might have ensued, but they had not courage to hazard it.

About this period, Commodore Sir Peter Parker, in the Bristol of 50 guns, joined Lord Howe, together with some frigates and transports, in the latter of which came

General Clinton, and a strong reinforcement of troops. This small fleet arrived from South Carolina, where an ill-judged attack had been made, and from which the king's ships were disgracefully forced to retreat, with the loss of three frigates and the mainmast of the Bristol.

The arrival of a crippled ship and a defeated officer, at *this time*, was very unwelcome; for it infused *fresh spirits* into the rebels, and showed them that ships were sometimes obliged to retreat from batteries.

Though every thing was apparently ready for going on service by the 15th August, yet it was the 26th before any enterprise was undertaken. On the morning preceding that day, Lord Howe (the Commander-in-chief,) sent for Sir George Collier, and acquainted him, that early next morning the troops were to make a descent in Gravesend Bay, upon Long Island, under cover of the fire of the men-of-war. The Admiral, therefore, directed Sir George to place the Rainbow in the *Narrows*, abreast of a large stone building, called Denyke's, (where he understood the rebels had cannon and a strong post,) in which situation the Rainbow would also be able to enfilade the road leading from New-York, and thereby prevent reinforcements being sent to the rebel *outposts*, as well as to their troops, who were stationed to oppose the landing.

By the dawn of day, the Rainbow was placed as the Admiral had directed. The principal engineer of the army had come on board in the night, to assist in directing the fire, and to point out any bands of *loyal subjects*, who might possibly approach, with an intention of joining and assisting the royal army.

The rebels, intimidated at the tremendous force which appeared in the flat boats, withdrew their outposts, and suffered the King's troops to land without the least opposition. Sir H. Clinton, with the grenadiers and light infantry of the army, got first on shore. They were soon

after followed by other bodies of men, making in all about 16,000:—with these last came General Howe, the commander-in-chief of the army, who marched to the small village of Utrecht, where he established his headquarters. Earl Cornwallis occupied the advanced post at *Flatbush*, a hamlet six miles from Utrecht.

The army remained in this situation without advancing, for some days; in which time the train of artillery, ammunition, baggage, and provisions were landed. Six regiments of the Hessians also joined the army, which amounted now to upwards of 20,000 men, *besides those* who remained on Staten Island.

At last, General Howe began his march towards New-York, the army moving in three columns, by as many different roads. Some of the rebel outposts were surprised, and the men all put to death with the bayonet. They fled in a panic wherever the royal troops appeared. A small stand was made by about 3,000 of them, who found themselves hemmed in: 2,500 of these were presently killed and made prisoners; the rest *frightened*, *defeated*, and *dismayed*, were pursued to the edge of a ditch of a temporary work they had thrown up, into which the victorious troops *would* have entered with them, *had they not been restrained* by the most positive *orders* of the General. The retreat was sounded, and the conquering army *halted*. Their ardour was, by this means, *cruelly checked;* and one of the most glorious opportunities of ending the rebellion *lost*. It was said, the *considerate* General, careful of the lives of his men, intended to attack these paltry retrenchments by way of *sapient*. However that was, the rebels did not give him the trouble of breaking ground before it, but in *silence* and *terror* abandoned their works as soon as it was dark, and crossing the East River in boats, got safely over, *without obstruction*, to New-York, with their artillery, baggage,

and provisions, where they joined General, Washington and the remainder of the rebel army.

The enemy's loss in killed and wounded, in the different skirmishes on Long Island, was about 4,000 men. Amongst the prisoners were two of their Generals,—one named Sullivan, who had been bred a lawyer; the other calling himself Lord Stirling. About 6,000 rebels, commanded by old Gates, fled across the water, who might all have been taken prisoners, had our troops been *suffered* to push on, or even if the men-of-war had proceeded to attack the batteries, as by getting into the East River they would have prevented boats from passing. Washington's army, with this reinforcement, amounted to 11,000 men; ours was at least double that number. As fresh reinforcements from Staten Island had joined the General, the men-of-war had moved gradually up as the troops advanced, and when the latter got to the margin of the East River, (which was about half a mile across,) the ships anchored just out of gunshot of the batteries of New-York.

The having to deal with a generous, merciful, *forbearing* enemy, who would take no unfair *advantages*, must surely have been highly satisfactory to General Washington, and he was certainly very deficient in not expressing his gratitude to General Howe for his *kind* behaviour towards him. Far from taking the rash resolution of *hastily passing* over the East River after Gates, and *crushing at once* a frightened, trembling enemy, he generously gave them time to recover from their panic,— to throw up *fresh works*,— to make new arrangements,— and to recover from the torpid state the rebellion appeared in from its late shock.

For *many succeeding* days did our brave veterans, consisting of twenty-two thousand men, stand on the banks of the East River, like Moses on Mount Pisgah, looking at their promised land, little more than half a mile distant. The rebel's standards waved insolently in the air, from

many different quarters of New York. The British troops could scarcely contain their indignation at the sight and at their own *inactivity;* the officers were *displeased and amazed*, not being able to account for the strange delay. Gates fled across the river on the 29th August. The Rainbow (with Sir George Collier), went to sea from thence on another service on the 8th *September*, at which time the royal army still remained on the *same spot* inactive, and without making any motions whatever. *How long* they continued this state of torpidity, or *what followed* their reanimation, cannot have place here; these pages being only intended to give an account of the services in which Sir George Collier was himself particularly engaged.

[*Detail of some Particular Services performed in America, during the years* 1776–9, *etc.* Printed for Ithiel Town from a manuscript; New York, 1835; and in the *Naval Chronicle*, 1841.]

[No. 36.]

Extract of a Letter from an Officer in the Maryland Battalion, dated Long Island, Wednesday Morning, daybreak.

August 28, 1776.

I have the pleasure to inform you that I have survived a very warm engagement yesterday. Our battalion has suffered much; a great number of both officers and men are killed and missing. We retreated through a very heavy fire, and escaped by swimming over a river, or creek rather. My height was of use to me, as I touched almost all the way. A number of men got drowned. I have lost no officers, and but few men. Captain *Veazey*, and Lieutenant *Butler* fell early in the engagement. We are now all safe in our lines and forts.

The affair yesterday was only a skirmish on the Island, about three miles from our works. The particulars I can not now give you, but we were deceived, and at one time surrounded with, I am convinced, ten thousand men. Our General, Lord *Stirling*, is missing.

[*American Archives*, 5th Series, fol., 1195, vol. I.]

[No. 37.]

Return of Prisoners taken on LONG-ISLAND, [*by the British*], *August* 27th, 1776.

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS.

Three Generals.

Major-General Sullivan,
Brigadier-General Lord Stirling,
Brigadier-General Udell.

Three Colonels.

Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment	1
Pennsylvania Musketeers -	1
New-Jersey Militia - - -	1

Four Lieutenant-Colonels.

Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment	1
Pennsylvania Militia - - -	2
17th Continental Regiment -	1

Three Majors.

Pennsylvania Militia - - -	1
17th Continental Regiment	1
22d Continental Regiment -	1

Eighteen Captains.

Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment	2
Pennsylvania Musketeers -	4
Pennsylvania Militia - - -	5
17th Continental Regiment	4
Train of Artillery - - - -	1
Maryland Provincials - -	2

Forty-Three Lieutenants.

Provincial Rifle Regiments	11
Pennsylvania Musketeers - -	1
Pennsylvania Militia - - -	6
17th Continental Regiment	6
Delaware Battalion - - -	2
1st Battalion New York Continental - - - - - - -	5
11th Battalion Continental	1
New-Jersey Militia - - -	1
1st Battalion Maryland Independents - - - - - - -	2
Long Island Militia - - -	2
Train of Artillery . - - -	1
Maryland Provincials - -	5

Eleven Ensigns.

Pennsylvania Musketeers -	4
17th Continental Regiment	5
Maryland Provincials - -	2

Staff.

Adjutant - - - - - - -	1
Surgeons - - - - - - -	3
Volunteers - - - - - - -	2
Privates - - - - - - -	1006
Total - - - - -	1097

N.B. Nine Officers and fifty-eight Privates of the above wounded.

JOS. LORING, *Commis. of Prisoners.*

[*American Archives*, fol. 1258, vol. I, 5th Series.]

Return of Brass and Iron Ordnance taken from the enemy in the engagement on the 27th of AUGUST, 1776, *and found in their different Redoubts on* LONG-ISLAND *and* GOVERNOUR'S ISLAND.

Camp at Newtown, September 3, 1776.

Brass Ordnance taken in the engagement 27 AUGUST, 1776.

One five and half-inch howitzer, four 6-pounders, one 3-pounder. Total of Brass Ordnance, 6.

Iron Ordnance found in the different Forts on LONG-ISLAND *and* GOVERNOUR'S ISLAND.

Six 32-pounders, one 24-pounder, four 18-pounders, two 12-pounders, two 9-pounders, eight 6-pounders, three 3-pounders. Total of Iron Ordnance, 26.

A quantity of shot, shells, ammunition, intrenching tools, small-arms, a number of long pikes, ammunition carts, and many other articles not at present ascertained.

W. HOWE, *Commander-in-Chief.*

[Ibid.]

Return of the Killed, Wounded, and Missing, of the following Corps, AUGUST 27, 1776.

First Battalion of Light-Infantry.— Four Rank and File, killed; two Sergeants, one Drummer, twenty-one Rank and File, wounded, one Rank and File, Missing.

Second Battalion of Light-Infantry.— Four Rank and File killed; one Captain, two Lieutenants, one Sergeant, twenty-seven Rank File wounded.

Third Battalion of Light-Infantry.—Three Rank and File, killed; six Rank and File wounded.

Reserve.

First Battalion of Grenadiers.—One Rank and File, killed; four Rank and File, wounded.

Second Battalion of Grenadiers.—Two Captains, one Sergeant, nine Rank and File, killed; one Lieutenant-Colonel, one Captain, three Lieutenants, one Drummer, thirty-two Rank and File, wounded; one Lieutenant, one Sergeant, twenty Rank and File, missing.

Third Battalion of Grenadiers.—One Rank and File, wounded.

Fourth Battalion of Grenadiers.—One Rank and File, killed; one Sergeant, eleven Rank and File, wounded; one Rank and File, missing.

33*d Regiment.*—Four Rank and File, wounded.

42*d Regiment.*—One Lieutenant, nine Rank and File, wounded.

FIRST BRIGADE.

4*th Regiment.*—None killed, wounded, or missing.

15*th Regiment.*—Two Rank and File, wounded.

27*th Regiment.*—None killed, wounded, or missing.

45*th Regiment.*—None killed, wounded, or missing.

SECOND BRIGADE.

5*th Regiment.*—None killed, wounded, or missing.

28*th* ditto. ditto. ditto.

35*th* ditto. ditto. ditto.

49*th* ditto. ditto. ditto.

THIRD BRIGADE.

10*th Regiment.*—None killed, wounded or missing.

37*th* ditto. One Rank and File, wounded.

38*th* ditto. Three Rank and File, wounded.

52d ditto. One Rank and File, killed; seven Rank and File, wounded; one Rank and File, missing.

FOURTH BRIGADE.

17*th Regiment.*—One Captain, two Rank and File, killed; one Lieutenant, one Sergeant, nineteen Rank and File, wounded.

40*th Regiment.*—One Lieutenant-Colonel, one Rank and File, killed; five Rank and File, wounded.

46*th Regiment.*—Four Rank and File, wounded.

55*th Regiment.*—One Rank and File, killed; three Rank and File, wounded.

FIFTH BRIGADE.

22*d Regiment.*— One Rank and File, killed; one Rank and File, wounded.

43*d Regiment.*— One Rank and File, killed.

54*th Regiment.*— None killed, wounded, or missing.

63*d Regiment.*— None killed, wounded, or missing.

SIXTH BRIGADE.

23*d Regiment.*— One Sergeant, six Rank and File, killed; one Captain, one Sergeant, twenty-six Rank and File, wounded.

44*th Regiment.*— Ten Rank and File, killed; one Lieutenant, one Sergeant, seventeen Rank and File, wounded.

57*th Regiment.*— One Rank and File, killed.

64*th Regiment.*— None killed, wounded, or missing.

SEVENTH BRIGADE.

71*st Regiment.*— Three Rank and File, killed; two Sergeants, nine Rank and File, wounded; six Rank and File missing.

New-York Companies.— Four Rank and File, killed; two Sergeants, one Drummer, fourteen Rank and File, wounded.

Royal Artillery.— One Lieutenant, one Sergeant, killed; five Rank and File, wounded.

Total: One Lieutenant-Colonel, three Captains, one Lieutenant, three Sergeants, fifty-three Rank and File, killed; one Lieutenant-Colonel, three Captains, eight Lieutenants, eleven Sergeants, three Drummers, two hundred and thirty-one Rank and File, wounded; one Lieutenant, one Sergeant, twenty-nine Rank and File, missing.

List of Officers, killed, wounded, and missing.

Killed.—	Captain Sir Alexander Murray	17th Regiment.
"	Lieutenant-Colonel Grant	40th ditto.
"	Captain Nelson	52d ditto.
"	Captain Logan	2d Regiment Marines.
"	Second Lieutenant Lovell	Royal Artillery.
Wounded.—	Lieutenant Morgan	17th Regiment.
"	Captain Grove	23d ditto.
"	Lieutenant Crammond	42d ditto.
"	Lieutenant Mair	43d ditto.
"	Lieutenant Weir	43d ditto.
"	Captain Brown	44th ditto.
"	Captain Kennedy	44th ditto.
"	Lieutenant Brown	44th ditto.
"	Lieutenant-Colonel Monckton	45th ditto.
"	Lieutenant Powell	49th ditto.
"	Lieutenant Addison	52d ditto.
"	Lieutenant Nugent	1st Regiment Marines.

Missing.—Lieutenant Ragg, 2d Regiment Marines, prisoner.

Hessian Troops.—Two Rank and File, killed; twenty-three Rank and File, wounded.

Major Paoli, Captain O'Reilly, Lieutenant Donop, wounded.

W. Howe, *Commander-in-Chief.*

[*American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th series, folio 1258.]

[No. 38.]

Affidavit of Lieut. Robert Troup, made before Gouverneur Morris who was ordered by the Convention of the State of New York, to prepare a narrative of the conduct of British officers and troops towards the American prisoners, etc., and to collect affidavits for that purpose.

Dutchess County, ss:—Robert Troup, Esquire, late lieutenant in Colo. Lasher's battalion of militia, being duly sworn upon the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, deposeth and saith, that he, this deponent, about three o'clock in the morning of the twenty-seventh day of August last, was made a prisoner of war on Long Island, by a detachment of the British troops; that deponent, together with Lieutenant Dunscombe, Adjutant Hooglandt and two volunteers, were carried immediately to the main body of the British army, and interrogated by the generals of the same; that they were there threatened with being hung for entering into the American service; that from thence they were led to a house near Flat Bush; that several of the British officers came there, by whom they were grossly insulted; that about nine o'clock in the morning they were led in the rear of the army to Bedford; that while there, deponent, with seventeen other officers who had been made prisoners that morning, were confined under the provost guard, in a small soldiers' tent; in which, they were left two nights and near three days; that it rained

very hard during the greater part of the time, and the prisoners were obliged by turns to go out of the tent, there not being sufficient room for them to stay within it; that about sixty private soldiers were also kept prisoners at the same place, having also one tent, and only one, to shelter them from the weather; that while deponent was confined at Bedford, he, together with the officers with him, were much abused and treated with the grossest language by almost all the British officers, and in their presence by the British soldiers; that the provost marshall, one Cunningham, brought with him a negro with a halter, telling them the negro had already hung several, and that he imagined he would hang some more, and that the negro and Cunningham also insulted the prisoners shewing them the halter, and in like manner with the British officers and soldiers, calling them rebels, scoundrels, villains, robbers, murderers, and so forth; that from Bedford the deponent and the other prisoners were led to Flat Bush, where they were confined a week in the house of Mr. Lefferts, and kept upon a very short allowance of biscuit and salt pork; that several of the Hessian soldiers while they were confined at Flat Bush, took pity upon their situation and gave them some apples, and at one time some fresh beef, which much relieved them; that from Flat Bush, deponent, with between seventy and eighty officers who were prisoners there, were put on board a small snow lying between Gravesend and the Hook, which had been employed in bringing cattle from England; that they were kept on board the said snow six weeks, and obliged to lay upon the dung and filth of the cattle without any bedding or blankets; that during their stay in the said snow, observing an old main sail which lay on the quarter deck, the prisoners begged the captain to permit them to take it into the hold and lie upon it, which request was refused with much opprobrious language, the captain damning them for a pack of rebels;

and telling them the hold was good enough for such scoundrels; that while on board the said snow they were much afflicted with lice and other vermin; that the prisoners applied for soap and fresh water to wash their clothes but were refused; that while they were confined in the said snow they were obliged to drink stinking water which had been brought with them from England, and when they asked for better they were told it was good enough for rebels; that during their stay on board the said snow they were allowed only six ounces of pork and a pint of flour, or the same proportion in biscuit for each man; that they were obliged to dress all their food with their stinking water above mentioned; and for a considerable time were obliged to wait until all the ship's crew had eaten their breakfast and dinner before they were allowed to dress their victuals; that during their confinement, having procured a little money from their friends, they employed the captain of the transport to go on shore and purchase necessaries for them, which he refused to do without a very large commission, charging them fifteen coppers for a loat of bread; that from the transport they were brought to the city of New York, and confined in a house near Bridewell, where they were kept upon the same short allowance as they had been on board the transport, with the addition of one ounce of butter per week, and a little rice for each man, procured at the request of Govr. Skeene, as deponent was informed; that when the prisoners were first brought to the said city they were not allowed any fuel, and afterwards only a small quantity of coal, which did not suffice them more than three days out of a week; that during their continuance in New York, the allowance of provisions was dealt out very negligently, and from the scantiness and quality, and the bad state of health they laboured under, he doth verily believe that most of them would have died if they had not been supported by the benevo-

lence of some poor persons and common prostitutes, who took pity of their miserable situation and alleviated it; that the prisoners were continued in confinement at New York until a short time after the taking of Fort Washington, when they were allowed to walk about the town; that deponent understood from several persons that the privates who were prisoners in the city of New York, were uniformly treated with great inhumanity; that they were kept in a starving condition, without fuel or the common necessaries of life; that they were obliged to obey the calls of nature in the respective places of their confinement, and from disease and want of care and attention, and by the mere dint of hard usage died daily in great numbers, so that of the prisoners who had been taken on Long Island, near one-half have died. And this deponent further saith that while he was as aforesaid confined on board the said transport, Brigadier-Genl. Woodhull was also brought on board in a shocking mangled condition; that deponent asked the General the particulars of his capture, and was told by the said General that he had been taken by a party of light horse under the command of Capt. Oliver Delancey; that he was asked by the said captain if he would surrender; that he answered in the affirmative, provided he would treat him like a gentleman, which Capt. Delancey assured him he would, whereupon the General delivered his sword, and that immediately after, the said Oliver Delancey, junr., struck him, and others of the said party imitating his example, did cruelly hack and cut him in the manner he then was; that although he was in such a mangled and horrid situation, he had nevertheless been obliged to sleep on the bare floor of the said transport, if a lieutenant of the man-of-war who guarded the transport, had not lent him a matrass; that Gen. Woodhull was afterwards carried to the hospital in the church of New Utrecht where he perished, as deponent was on good authority informed,

through want of care and necessaries; and further this deponent saith not.

ROB. TROUP.

Sworn the 17th Jany., 1777, before me,
GOUV. MORRIS.

[*Journal Provincial Congress*, vol. II, p. 410.]

[No. 40.]

Hessian Account of the Movements of the Allied Forces, and the Actions in which they were engaged on Long Island.

On the 11th of June,[1] when General Howe had gained the intelligence of the coming of fresh troops from Europe, he set sail again with his troops from Halifax, and arrived off Sandy Hook on the 29th. He designed to take up a position in or near New-York, so that no time might be lost, on the arrival of reinforcements, in combining their forces with his own. He soon after landed his troops on Staten-Island, right opposite Long-Island. All his active forces at that time, taken together, amounted to about 9000 men. Here he resolved to await the arrival of the fleet, with the troops from Europe, and of General Clinton from Carolina, who was just returning from his unfortunate expedition.

These forces, in proportion very inadequate in a country so large, and thrown in a state of excitement, were parcelled out at exceeding great distances, taking up the vast extent of nearly two hundred German miles, being the distance from Canada down to South-Carolina. A connection between the different corps, or an energetic mutual aid, was therefore out of the question.

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[1] According to others on the 6th of June.

Let us now fix our eyes upon the two men whom the Ministry had entrusted, in the present war, with the supreme command of the British land and naval forces in America, and who were to maintain the supposed rights of England, in this part of the globe. The two brothers Howe were known as men who owed their high position not merely to favor but also to merit; the public therefore thought such a selection perfectly justified. In former battles they had on several occasions given proofs of their valor and sagacity. Viscount Richard, the admiral and elder brother, was an enterprising, energetic and sober character, who had already, as an officer in the navy, reaped honors and valuable knowledge. In his demeanor he showed, beside the inherent pride of the Briton, a cold reserve to those who were not of his own rank, and a profound contempt for those, who, in his opinion, had audaciously risen against their mother country and their king, and whom he looked upon as nothing more than miserable rebels deserving punishment.

The younger brother, William the chevalier, had acquired similar distinctions on land to those the elder brother had gained at sea. He was considered one of the most experienced and best qualified generals of the British army, and had already fought with glory in the previous war in America. In respect to his disposition, he was very different from his brother; for although he maintained an aristocratic deportment, he was more affable and complaisant, but had neither the other's energy nor his activity, and sometimes betrayed, even in the most important affairs, a degree of carelessness and sluggishness, which was unpardonable. The elder brother was sober and abstemious, but William was much given to sensual pleasures and enjoyments of every kind, frequently forgetting in their pursuit the high duties of a general. He kept at all times a good kitchen, and usually

also a mistress, and liked to see others enjoy themselves in the same way. He was easily influenced by those in whom he often too rashly placed confidence, and readily suffered himself to be guided or persuaded by persons whose capacities he far overrated. Possessed of many good qualities, his weaknesses were not condemned with such severity as they would be at the present time; indeed many looked upon them as evidences of knightly character. Thus it happened that Sir William was loved and respected by the officers and men of the two nationalities more than any other general.[1] The British government probably thought, that in the case of two brothers who had hitherto lived in harmony together, their accordance might likewise bring about harmonious activity in their common operations. It was this view which confirmed them in the opinion that they had made a good selection. But let us look at the result.

The British commander-in-chief was already revolving in his mind the scheme of crossing over to Long-Island and dislodging the enemy who had fortified themselves there in order to cover New York, a place of much importance. The reinforcements having arrived, he now gave the necessary orders for that purpose; the Hessians were selected to cooperate.

In the first place the brigade[2] Von Stirn was ordered to advance to the Jersey sound, an arm of the sea which separates the island from the mainland and there to relieve the 35th English regiment and part of the 5th. On the morning of the 19th August, the brigade set out on the march, the tents and baggage being placed on wagons. The strange vehicles — little chariots painted red with two ponies to each — appeared new and odd-looking to our good

[1] A Hessian officer says in speaking of this man, "General Howe is more than a whole army."

[2] Regiments Von Kuyphausen, Von Lossberg and Rall.

Hessians. When the brigade marched into their destined place, the English officers were so civil as to invite the Germans to dinner. As the night set in the relieving took place. The outposts were set very near to those of the enemy, who occupied the opposite shore of the narrow sound. The whole brigade was placed along the shore, divided off in little detachments. The regiment of body-guards took its position at Amboy ferry. The camp was pitched in two lines, but a few days after it had to be removed a little further back, as the Americans, with their long rifles kept shooting at the Hessians from the opposite shore; and as in this manner the outposts were continually molested, Grenke, a lieutenant of the artillery, was ordered to send a few cannon balls into Amboy, whereupon the Americans kept more quiet. The breadth of the strait might be somewhat more than three hundred paces. The Americans, who saw for the first time the German new-comers they so much feared, assembled in clusters on the shores, more to satisfy their curiosity, than because they expected a demonstration from this side. A Hessian officer says in his journal; "They stretched forth their necks excessively. Some of them were dressed in regimentals, but most of them in the accoutrements of an assembled mob."

The landing of the newly arrived reinforcements had spread not a little fear among the Americans. They stood in awe principally of the Germans, whom they imagined to be half devils. A great part of the inhabitants of the country places had therefore fled in the utmost haste to the greater cities, principally New York, leaving behind their goods and chattels, and sometimes their money and precious stones. This fear was still further increased when the troops possessed themselves by force of the quarters assigned to them, which were at first refused by the refractory inhabitants.

The greatest moderation in their dealings with the inhabitants, even the disaffected ones, had been enjoined upon the soldiers, and most rigidly enforced by their superiors, for they still indulged the hope of an amicable settlement of the respective differences, and for that reason they desired to see his Majesty's "subjects" treated with forbearance, as far as possible, and everything avoided that might provoke them more. This was the earnest wish of the British as well as the German generals; however, this moderation was not appreciated, and they treated the quartered soldiers in the rudest manner, nay, they had a good mind to thrust them out of doors without ceremony. This of course gave rise to all sorts of provocations and excesses, since both officers and men considered themselves as warriors in the country of an enemy.

When the first fear and excitement among the population had subsided, and people had become aware that, after all, they had not to deal with robbers and anthropophagi, the fugitives gradually returned to their homes, and were not a little surprised to find not only their dwellings as they left them, but also the furniture, their effects, aye, even their money and trinkets. The fact was that the Germans, used to discipline, did not ask for more than they were entitled to. Their mutual relations now took a more friendly form, and it was not a rare case that a thorough republican would treat the quartered soldier like one entitled to his hospitality, and carefully nurse the sick or wounded one. Those parts of the country that had just been occupied, enjoying a mild climate, and offering to the view their rich and alternating natural beauties, as well as their great fertility, bore a paradisaical appearance; the most delicious fruits, the most odoriferous and beautiful flowers, grew here almost wild; everywhere neat and smiling villas and villages; newly planned cities, growing visibly in size; prosperity, nay, luxury, among the inhabit-

ants, who with trifling exertion made an easy and abundant living. Almost every owner of a little estate kept his gig and his black servants. There was scarcely a trace of war, especially on Staten Island and Long Island, in spite of their being, since its beginning, the scene of action, now seized by the European, now by the American party. The Germans were not a little surprised to see people living in such affluence and comfort revolt against a government under whose admistration they seemed to be doing so well; and how trifling were the taxes and duties in this country, when compared with those of the German States. A country squire in Germany hardly lived so comfortably in his castle as the most ordinary farmer on his acres hereabouts. The commander-in-chief who could now dispose of 35,000 choice troops,[1] went to work with vigor in order to dislodge the Americans from Long Island where they had strongly intrenched themselves, chiefly near Brooklyn. This long-drawn island, opposite Staten Island, is separated from the latter by an inlet about an English mile wide, called the Narrows, in which the British ships had cast anchor. At the western end of the island, opposite New York, lay the village of Brooklyn, and before this place rose at that time some wooded heights, which had been strongly garrisoned and fortified by the Americans. These places were separated by a strait, which in this place is not quite an English mile wide. Before the Brooklyn entrenchments a ridge of hills extends across the narrower side of the island — the heights of Guiana.[2] About the distance[3] of two miles and

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[1] The united forces England had in America in the year 1776, are stated to have been 55,000 men, land forces, and 28,000 marines. The number of German troops included in the above, is estimated at 16,968 men. *S. Sprenel's History of the American Revolution*, p. 141.

[2] Gowanns.

[3] Here and in what follows, English miles are meant.

a half from those heights near Brooklyn, beginning at the Narrows, three highways run, the left one brings you to Bedford, and from there further on, through a narrow passage, to the village of Jamaica. The central one runs across the heights to the village of Flatbush, and the third, to the right, along Gowanus bay, consequently south of Brooklyn to the Gravesend bay. On this side they knew that the fortifications were strong and lined with Washington's choice troops, under Nathanael Greene, one of the best American generals. They were therefore aware that they would meet with a warm reception.

Not later than the 19th the British troops were embarked; on the 21st the Hessian grenadiers and sharpshooters, and on the 22d the first division under Clinton went ashore on Long Island near Utrecht. The reserve coming later, was commanded by Lord Cornwallis.[1] The Hessian sharpshooters and grenadiers formed henceforth one brigade under the brave Colonel Van Donop, which was for the most part used as an advanced guard. The Americans had left the shore without firing one shot, but not without first setting some cornhouses on fire. Lord Cornwallis was immediately detached to Flatbush, at the head of the reserve, together with the van under Donop, and six pieces of ordnance, with the direction however not to attack the place if he found it occupied. Cornwallis took his position near Gravesend and pushed Donop up to Flatbush. When the latter arrived there towards evening, the garrison, consisting of three hundred riflemen, immediately withdrew, a few cannon balls being sent after them. On the morning of the 23d the right wing of the advanced guard was here attacked, but when a cannon was mounted the Americans retired. In the afternoon they essayed

[1] To this corps belongs the following sections of English. The first brigade, one brigade of light infantry, the reserve under Cornwallis, and the 71st regiment.

another attack on the left wing, drove it back into the village, and fired some houses. At last they were driven back by the artillery. On the 25th a stronger body of American troops, with some cannon, pressed forward; the village was bombarded with round shot and grape shot, but the artillery on this side again repelled the enemy. The Hessian sharpshooters, who till now had been stationed as pickets, were allowed to rest a little on the night of the 24th, but at 2 o'clock in the morning of of the 25th they were again alarmed by an attack and hastened again to their post; the Americans were soon rebuffed, and when on the 26th they advanced again in greater force, Cornwallis would have it that Donop should retreat, but he begged to be allowed to stay, and intrenched himself.

In the meantime General Von Heister had also crossed over with some of his Hessians from Staten to Long Island, on the 25th of August. Lossberg's brigade, consisting of the regiment of body guards, the regiments Prince Charles Von Ditfurth and Von Trumbach, together with the 14th English regiment; the convalescents were left behind on the former island.[1] The troops following after forthwith marched on the central road to Flatbush, whilst Cornwallis, who had hitherto been stationed here, now took his position on the right wing of the army. The allies at present occupied the field from the Narrows to Utrecht and Gravesend. The Americans, who stood in the entrenchments near Brooklyn and on the heights already mentioned, lying in front, had stationed on the latter a greater part of their active forces. The right flank

[1] We find here the brigades differently composed from what they were when they left Hessia. On the 25th General Von Stirn received the brigade Mirbach regiments Hereditary Prince (Erbprinz), Von Donop, and Von Mirbach. Heister crossed over to Long Island with the two brigades, Von Stirn and Von Mirbach.

of the lines from Brooklyn extended to the mouth of the Hudson. In front of said estuary a small bay called Gowanus Bay stretched far inland through marshy ground, so that there was but a small space left between the bay and the heights. The left flank abutted on the Wallabout Bay.

On the 26th the troops had a day of rest. Heister however detached Colonel Von Heringen of the regiment Von Lossberg with 306 men and a few pieces of ordnance to the left flank as an advanced post. When he had here relieved the Highlanders (71st regiment), he was attacked by riflemen and lost some of his men, but he drove them back with his cannon pretty soon.

In the evening of the same day, about nine o'clock, Clinton with his corps had set out in perfect secrecy and kept marching slowly to the right, on the road to Bedford, in order to possess himself of the important pass there, which he had reason to believe was occupied by the enemy. The next day, very early in the morning, he advanced precipitately and learned to his great surprise, when he was still 1½ miles distant from it, of some reconnoitering patrol sent in advance, (according to others, of an American patrol taken prisoner,) that the important defile was not occupied at all. Clinton immediately pushed forward a battalion of light infantry to seize the same while he made a stand awaiting the break of day. Behind him was the British chief strength, under Lord Percy, consisting of the 2d, 3d, and 5th brigades, the 49th regiment and 16 pieces of ordnance, among the rest the three twelve pounders. With these troops was also the General-in-chief Howe. With the first dawning of the morning all his troops resumed their march, in order to complete the turning of the left wing. In the morning of the 27th, at 8 o'clock, Clinton's van-guard had reached Bedford, so he now stood in the rear of the enemy's left

flank. Some troops of militia-men who had occupied the heights there, had retreated in the greatest haste lest they might be cut off. They were, however, pursued and dispersed, while the pursuers grew so heated, that in spite of a fierce firing of cannons and muskets they were going to storm the American entrenchments immediately, and would only be detained from it by the greatest exertion. The withdrawn troops were gathered again in a defile which ran along a certain distance in front of the American camp.

While these events took place on the right wing, General Von Heister, who with his Hessians formed the centre, had advanced with break of day on the road to Flatbush, where he got into an engagement with the enemy by opening a cannonade, to which the latter answered with animation. Heister's task was to enter only into a sham engagement, and to draw the attention of the Americans so long on himself, that the turning of their left wing should be completely accomplished. The tents had been left standing, but the baggage was sent back. The Americans were posted here on the heights of Guiana, which were very advantageously located, covered with dense forests, and well intrenched. Donop, who had maintained his ground, requested to be allowed to make the first attack with his sharpshooters and grenadiers, which was accorded to him. As soon as General Von Heister heard the report of cannon on his right, and knew from the direction, that the effort to turn the enemy's wing had succeeded, he also briskly proceeded to make a fierce charge. The grenadiers stood in their divisions before the lines, and in front of them as flankers the company of sharpshooters under Captain Wreden. The brigade Von Mirbach had chiefly to cover the left flank. The regiments advanced bravely and in the best order up the heights, with drums and fifes and flying colors, carrying

the cannon along with them through the wilderness with great exertion. When the troops, exposed to a fierce cannonading of the enemy, which however hurt them but little, had arrived on the heights, they were formed in line, the same as on the drilling ground. The Americans were vigorously driven back by the flankers sent in advance; many of them were killed or made prisoners, while the regiments followed the former in a solid body with their arms shouldered. Colonel Von Heeringen writes to Colonel Von Lossberg: "The enemy was covered by almost impenetrable brushwood, lines, abatis, and redoubts. The greater part of the riflemen were pierced with the bayonet to the trees. These dreadful people ought rather to be pitied than feared; they always require a quarter of an hour's time to load a rifle, and in the meantime they feel the effects of our balls and bayonets." [1]

The sharpshooters of the left wing, stimulated by their eager desire for the combat, advanced with such vehemence that their captain was not able to keep them back; they pushed on even into the fortified works of the American camp, and saw the latter lying to the left, and a redoubt on the right. Taken unawares by the sudden appearance of the Hessians, the Americans flocked together in troops of fifty and sixty men, but the former left them no time to fall in, they were partly killed, dispersed and made prisoners. This took place in sight of the garrison in the enemy's lines.

In the beginning the Hessians had the American Colonel Hand against them, who was here posted with his riflemen, but when he was pressed harder and harder, General Sullivan himself hastened to his assistance; he

[1] *Prussian Military Weekly*, 1833, Nos. 863, 864, p. 4854. This account is given by Colonel V. Heeringen, but not of the regiment Von Schenck, as here said by mistake, but of the regiment Von Lossberg, to the commander of which, who had remained behind on Staten Island, he relates it.

too had to give way and issued the order to retreat, but too late, for when Heister had driven him into the plain, the British dragoons came already in swarms from the right wing, followed by Clinton's light infantry. The Americans cut off, and between two fires, were soon thrown into sad confusion, and a great carnage ensued, as they fought on both sides with the greatest animosity. The Americans knew no better than that the Hessians gave no quarter. Every one of the former, therefore, endeavored to sell his life as dear as possible, or to save it by flight, while the Hessians grew more and more exasperated by this supposed obstinate and useless resistance. On one side, therefore, fierce combat, and on the other a wild and orderless flight. Part of them sought their safety in the woods, but many others got into the swamps, and perished there most miserably, or were made prisoners: only a small number of them succeeded in cutting their way through, and arriving at the lines. The Hessians had fired off their muskets but once when they charged on their opponents with their bayonets. The Mirbach brigade which was posted more to the left, now likewise joined in the battle. The regiment Rall, that stood in the centre, had to march with the order "to the right about" through a narrow passage. As there was an open view, they saw a troop of Americans, about fifty men, hastening toward them, with flying colors. Rall commanded to give fire. The Americans who had lost their way or who had been cut off from their countrymen, surrendered and begged for quarter, whereupon they laid down their arms. An under officer leaping forward took away the colors. He was just going to present them to Colonel Rall, when General Von Mirbach arrived, and was about snatching the colors from the under officer's hand, when Rall said in a tone of vexation, "By no means, General, my grenadiers have taken these colors, they shall keep them, and I shall

not permit any one to take them away." A short altercation now took place between them, and they separated in angry mood, but the colors remained for the present with Rall's regiment. The occurrence was noticed at headquarters. Soon after Colonel Rall was appointed inspecting commander of the brigade.

Let us now turn our attention to the incidents occurring on the left wing, although they are not of so much consideration as were those on the right and in the centre. The British General Grant had received the instruction that he was not to enter into any serious engagement, but merely to occupy the attention of the American right wing in every possible way. For this purpose they added to his division the 4th and 6th English Brigades, the 42d regiment, two companies of the New York provincials, and ten pieces of ordnance. At midnight he attacked the enemy's advanced guards, and continued his efforts next morning, but when he heard to his right the increased thunder of artillery, he too proceeded to a serious charge. The American General Lord Stirling, who commanded here, soon got between two fires, for Cornwallis with the reserve was approaching his left at the moment Stirling was just going to retreat to the Gowanus Bay by crossing a brook, but it was now too late. Once more he made a most desperate resistance, but he was soon forced to surrender as his troops were surrounded on every side. Bearing a burning hatred to the Britons he would not give himself up prisoner to them, he went therefore in quest of General Von Heister and gave up his sword to him. In order to divide the attention of the Americans still more, Howe had requested Admiral Parker to approach with six ships of the line, the American batteries, erected along the shore and fire upon them; but the wind being adverse and the tide ebbing, only one ship succeeded in getting within gun-shot reach. Howe himself, in his offi-

cial return, sets down the loss of the Americans in killed, wounded and prisoners at about 3,500 men. Among the last were three generals, Stirling, Sullivan, and Udell,[1] three colonels, four lieutenant-colonels, three majors, eighteen captains, forty-three lieutenants, one aid-de-camp, eleven ensigns, and 1011 privates, provincial troops and militia,[2] 15 cannons, and one howitzer; some banners, ammunition, wagons, and intrenching tools, and many other accoutrements were made booty of. The Hessians alone took one ensign and five pieces of ordnance, and made five hundred and twenty prisoners; among the rest, General Sullivan and thirty-five officers. The general was found hidden in a field of indian corn, about a hundred steps distant from Col. Von Heeringen's post, by 3 fusiliers of Von Kuyphausen's regiment. Heeringen continues the subject by saying, "John Sullivan is a lawyer, but before has been a footman; he is however a man of genius, whom the rebels will very much regret. Among the prisoners are many who call themselves colonels, lieutenant-colonels and majors; likewise other officers who are nothing more than artizans, tailors, coblers, wigmakers, barbers, etc. Some received a good thrashing by our men who do not recognize such people as officers. Sullivan was brought to me; I had him searched and the original orders of General Washington were found upon him; from which it appears he had the best of his troops placed under his command, that everything depended upon their maintain-

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[1] In all historical works he passes under the above name, but is called by Marshall in his work (*Life of George Washington*, vol. II, chapter 7), Woodhull. He adds in a note, "Lord Howe mentioned this last officer by mistake under the name of de Udell."

[2] Donop's aid-de-camp specifies the prisoners in the following manner: three generals, seven officers of the staff, fifty-six sub-officers, six surgeons, one thousand and six privates. He sets down the number of cannon taken at fourteen, of which the Hessians took seven. In the fortifications ten iron cannons were found, and five were captured in the field.

ing their ground in the forest, and that his forces amounted to 8000 men. The English have 150 killed and wounded; they owe this rather to their irregular attacking than to the enemy's bravery. The forest was a scene of horror; there were certainly 2000 killed and wounded lying about. Colonel Johnson of the rebels is dead. A grenadier made him prisoner and generously spared his life; he told him he should only go to his battalion that was following, for the grenadier was a flanker. The colonel however endeavored maliciously to murder him from behind, drew secretly a pistol but hit only his arm, for which the latter requited him by thrusting his bayonet three times into his body. Among the officers taken prisoners I did not meet with one who had been in foreign service. They are all rebels and resident citizens of the country. Our taylor general would play here a conspicuous part. My Lord Stirling himself is only an '*Echappé de famille*,' and in England they will not allow him the title.[1] He is as much like my Lord Granby as one egg is like another. General Putnam is a butcher by trade, I portray him in my mind like butcher Fisher in Rinteler. The rebels desert frequently and it is nothing new to see colonels, lieutenant-colonels and majors arrive with whole troops of men. The captured colours of red damask, with the motto 'Liberty,' now took their stand with sixty men in front, at the head of regiment Rall; they had all shouldered their arms upside down,

[1] The letter of a Hessian officer says, with respect to the three American generals taken prisoners. "Sullivan was a lawyer, and promoted in eight months to the rank of major-general, this was achieved by a brother of his being a leading member of Congress. He is a native of Ireland. Stirling is the son of a fisherman. His father was a Scotchman and grew so rich that he sought to bear the title of Lord Alexander Stirling. In England to be sure this title was never accorded to him, but in America they honored the son with it in deference to his riches, and for the same reason he was raised to the rank of Brigadier-General although he had never served in his life. Udell is a foreigner whose real descent is unknown."

carried their hats under their arms, fell upon their knees, and entreated us most earnestly to spare their lives. No regiment is properly dressed or armed; every one has a common musket like those which citizens use in Hessia, when they march out of town on Whitsuntide, with the exception of regiment Stirling, that was dressed in blue and red, and consisted of three battalions, for the most part, Germans enlisted in Pennsylvania. They were tall fine fellows, and had most beautiful English muskets with bayonets. This regiment met with an English troop, but being hidden by bushes the latter mistook them for Hessians and did not fire; this mistake they paid with the loss of Colonel Grant, some other officers and 80 privates. It was a general discharge. The English restored order in their ranks, attacked them with the bayonet, threw down everything in their way, and those they did not kill they took prisoners; in a word the whole regiment is cut up. The artillery of the rebels is wretched, mostly composed of iron, ill served, and is mounted on ship carriages."

The loss of the Hessians consisted in two men killed, a grenadier and a sharpshooter; three officers, Von Donop captain of the sharpshooters, Major Pauly of the artillery; and one lieutenant, together with twenty-three privates, mostly sharpshooters and grenadiers, wounded. The English lost in killed, five officers, fifty-six subaltern officers and soldiers; and there were twelve officers, two hundred and forty-five subaltern officers and privates wounded. The Americans taken prisoners, officers as well as soldiers, were put on board the ships. Among the other extraordinary things that showed themselves in this first battle in the new world, was the fact that almost all the German staff officers were without horses, as they did not take them along with them when leaving the old country, and they could not hunt out any until now. Donop's aid de camp, says on this subject in his diary, "Most of the higher

and subaltern officers went on foot, bearing their cloaks rolled up on the shoulder, with a large gourd bottle filled with water and rum, hanging down their side. This was also my fate, although I was adjutant, and whenever my brigadier Colonel Donop wanted me to carry an order speedily, he dismounted and gave me his old but solid stallion, which he had taken with him from Hessia."

Another singularity was that many officers, on this march or in battle, had their rifles hanging about them; Donop, too, carried one in default of which he would probably have been lost. During the skirmishing on the 25th, a rifleman being at a short distance aimed at him, but he (Donop) got the start of him and shot him through the head. The officers who went in advance with the flankers carried for the most part rifles with bayonets. The private soldiers also had to be indulged in many things which formerly were strictly interdicted. Being in their first fights they were permitted to wear their sabres across the chest in order to be able to during the great heat of the day to unbutton their jerkins, which were made of thick cloth. The strength of the troops on this side who took part in the action may have been about 15,000 men; as many more had remained on Staten Island and in the vessels. From the American side the strength of the allies is alleged to have been 25,000 men, which is evidently exaggerated, while they quote the number of their troops, that took a share in the battle, at 5,000 men, which on the other hand is too little.[1] They had stationed at least 8,000 men on the fore part of the heights, as appeared also from the documents found on Sullivan's person, and about 5,000 men were in the lines near Brooklyn.[2]

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[1] *Washington Irving's Life of George Washington*, vol. II, chap. 73.

[2] Wiebke, in his work *The First Years of the North American War for Liberty*, p. 182, assumes that 9,000 Americans had been employed to occupy the heights, and 5,000 to cover the lines.

Washington, as mentioned above, had at first given to General Greene the supreme command over these troops, but as the latter was suddenly taken ill, Sullivan received the command. He had but just joined the army with his corps, and was little acquainted with the dispositions already made; that was the reason why that important pass near Bedford had not been occupied, and why in the occupation of that part of the heights some deficiences were discovered. For the first time the European tactics could here be compared with the American. In proportion to its strength the American line was too much extended, and it lacked also timely support, while on the other hand, they had thrown out in front of it numerous swarms of skirmishers, whose well aimed fire was very galling, but that lasted not long. The Hessians and Britons, in their accustomed way, deployed their forces in greater masses, and soon drove the thin battle lines back with the bayonet without losing their time with firing.

When the left wing of the insurgents had been thrown back from the heights, it got into the marshy ground. Being the most distant from the line it could only retreat in a slanting direction, on the small strip of land between the Gowanus Bay and the heights; but part of the troops on the right wing, under Clinton, forestalled the Americans, and here they got into the most desperate position. In this battle the first Hessian blood was shed on American ground. Here they discovered that they had to deal with a peculiar opponent, and that sooner or later they would have to conform to a manner of fighting deviating in many respects from that which had hitherto been customary in Europe. The well-drilled and war-proof German soldier here found himself in circumstances for the most part new and strange. We cannot help making here a few more reflections on this first main battle of the allied troops and the Americans as enemies, regarding the

clamour which the latter raised against the desperate fighting manner of the Hessians, as showed on this occasion. The fear of them increased to terror; people spoke with horror of their bloody deeds, and were above all outraged that the Germans in some instances had not given quarter, and had even without grace and mercy stabbed to the ground unarmed men, and such as begged them to spare their lives. It was reported that more than two thousand men had in this manner fallen victims to a blind passion of revenge. That the Hessians were very much exasperated and furious is not to be denied, but that was owing chiefly to the circumstance that some troops of the enemy who had surrendered, and had begged for quarter, fired once more on the Hessians when they approached them unsuspectingly. This was contrary to all rules of war. The course pursued by the Hessians was urged upon them by the Britons.[1] Colonel Von Heeringen says on this subject in his letter to Colonel Von Lossburg, mentioned before: "The English soldiers did not give much quarter and constantly urged our men to follow their example." We have learned further from said letter how maliciously Col. Johnson dealt with the Hessian grenadier, and of the Pennsylvania regiment firing another volley after it was already cut off. All this was sufficient to heighten the passions of troops inured to war but not accustomed to such practices. From another incident already mentioned we notice that the Hessians did not pounce upon all in a blood-thirsty mood, for when Rall's regiment fell in with a troop of enemies and took them prisoners it was done without committing any act of violence. The slight with which they treated the Americans before, on account of their little effectiveness in battle, was still increased after

[1] *History of the War in and out of Europe*, part 1, p. 110.

the first collision. Many of them did not accept the quarter given them by the Hessians. "They were" says Lieutenant Ruffer in his diary, "so much afraid, that they suffered themselves rather to be shot than to accept quarter, because their generals and other officers had made them believe that if they did they would be hung.

The victors made the vanquished feel their humiliation, by putting the American prisoners to the cannons, and compelling them to draw the same on the bad roads up to the ships. However, this seems to have been done not so much to heap indignities upon them, as from necessity, for there was a want of horses, and the troops on this side, already extremely fatigued, would otherwise have been obliged to do it themselves. Howe treated the generals made prisoners with great courtesy: Stirling as well as Sullivan dined with him every day.

After a dreary night the Americans expected an immediate assault on their lines which they did not think they could possibly maintain, after their confidence had been extinguished by the defeat they had undergone. Howe actually began, with the dawn of the 28th of August, a cannonade on the enemy's works, while at the same time he gave directions to fortify his camp; he was however prevented from carrying out the latter plan by a heavy shower of rain, and in the course of the day, only some skirmishing on the outposts took place. Not before evening, when the rain had somewhat abated, were the pioneer works resumed, and continued on the day following. Howe had neglected to order men-of-war into the East River at the right time, by which means he would have cut off the retreat of the Americans to New York. When at last, on the morning of the 29th, while a dense fog was covering land and sea, he made preparations for it, his opponents became aware of his intention, and deferred no longer slipping out of that dangerous trap. In a council of war

convoked by Washington, the retreat was fixed on the following night, and so successfully executed that the troops on this side did not at all become aware of it.[1] The following morning, the 30th, the latter perceived to their no small surprise that the lines had been abandoned, and the Hessian regiments Von Donop and Von Lossberg occupied them immediately without waiting for further orders. Col. Von Heeringen, who had seized a height near the Hudson in the night of the 29th, was the first who became aware of it and notified it directly to Howe through Lieutenant Zoll. On receiving this intelligence Howe himself with the admiral went to see the Colonel, to convince himself of the correctness of the information, and in his presence advise with his brother as to what was now to be done. Both agreed to occupy immediately the other side of York Island with men-of-war. The heights seized by the Colonel were so close to New York that you could see people walking in the streets and even distinguish the color of their clothes. They found still remaining in the works eleven pieces of ordnance, much ammunition and a good deal of provisions. The Hessians alone drove away above 100 horses and near 300 cows.

Holland, Major of the English engineers, praises the Americans for having made their works good and lasting according to all the rules of strategy, and says that they might have been longer maintained if they had been properly garrisoned; however, nothing had been properly finished. According to the statement of an officer, the Hessians found yet another order in the American camp which said: "Since with such enemies as the Hessians every resistance offered is useless, they were to make good their retreat as well as they could."

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[1] Washington himself managed the retreat; he was the last who left the island.

At the English head-quarters they were so irritated on account of the escape, that they now regretted to have interfered with the vehemence of the troops when they were going to rush upon the lines on the 27th.[1] Heister with his two Hessian brigades had in the mean time occupied the heights near Brooklyn abandoned by the enemy, while Donop with his grenadiers and sharp-shooters had joined the right wing of the army at Bushwick. A British brigade remained at Bedford. General Howe had transferred his head-quarters to Newtown which received a garrison, as also did Bushwick, Hellgate, and Flushing. In the same way the two islands Montresor and Buchanan received again their garrison, and near Horens Hook some batteries were erected, which could sweep the passage at Hellgate. His chief object was to seize New York as soon as possible, since it promised not only excellent winter quarters, but might serve also as the best point of support for further operations. The Americans making the same reflections were resolved to do their utmost to prevent so important a place from falling into their enemy's hands, and began at once to strengthen their fortifications. But not all were of the same opinion; part of them even moved to set fire to the fine town, and to retire. Discord rose at last to such a height that serious scuffles ensued between the different parties, whereupon those of New England and Pennsylvania left scornfully the town.

As the troops stationed opposite could perfectly survey the banks on the other side, they now and then perceived also Washington when with numerous attendants he inspected the line of sentries. One day just when he ap-

[1] According to reliable information General Von Heister had ascertained from the troops that followed the retreating Americans up to their lines, that the left part of the enemy's camp fortifications was still a few hundred paces open. When after the battle the flanking corps again gained the centre, Heister communicated the discovery to General Howe and proposed

peared opposite one of the batteries, Captain Krug of the Hessian artillery ordered some shots to be fired at the troop on horse-back. At the third discharge Washington and his attendants made off. In the night of the first of September, some armed boats approached the outposts on Staten Island, and a discharge of musketry ensued and the Americans retired soon after. The same manœuvre was repeated in the night following. We perceived also from here that the enemy had strengthened himself by reinforcements. According to the statement of some of the inhabitants the enemy had actually contemplated a serious attack upon the camp. They were therefore very much on their guard on this side and every quarter of an hour the sentries had orders to call out to one another "All's well."

As General Howe had not succeeded in cutting off the enemy on Long Island, or rather had been neglectful in it, he was going to try it now on New York Island. While his ships were lying in front he made his troops throw up redoubts, and erect batteries behind the town. During the few days a more or less fierce cannonade had taken place. Howe had made all the preparations for a descent in secrecy. In the evening of the 13th September, five of the largest English men-of-war, of from 20 to 44 guns, sailed into the East River where they forced their way through the midst of the enemy's vessels, sunk in that strait and passed onward in spite of the awful firing from the batteries and forts. Thus they arrived at Bushwick opposite the place fixed on for the descent of the troops that were on board the ships. The flat-bottomed vessels and row-galleys, under command of Hotham, likewise reached

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to him to avail themselves of the confusion of the enemy, and the eager desire of the troops for the combat, and storm the camp on the weak point, but Howe had all kinds of scruples and thus neglected the favorable opportunity of following up his victory on the spot.

their place of destination in the darkness of night, and unnoticed by the enemy. Besides these, six more transport ships bearing likewise troops chosen for the descent, followed amidst the most galling fire. In order to divide the attention of the adversary, three frigates and a schooner were sent up the Hudson as far as Bloomingdale, in the morning of the 15th, which were likewise very much exposed to the heavy fire from the batteries erected on both sides of the river. Protected by the ships the troops of the first division, consisting of the English light infantry, the Highlanders, the reserve and the Hessian grenadiers, and sharpshooters, commanded by Colonel Donop, and who, with the troops under Cornwallis formed the van,[1] were embarked on the Newtown Creek in flat bottomed boats. Tents and baggage were left behind. It was a grand and splendid sight, when, accompanied by the raging thunder of the guns of five men-of-war and the British and American land batteries, the army was carried over in long and gaily colored rows of boats filled with troops moving in as good order, as when manœuvering on the land. Eye-witnesses can scarcely find words to give a sufficiently impressive description of this spectacle. Sir Henry Clinton was the chief commander of these troops, with the Generals Cornwallis, Vaughan and Leslie as assistants. After the enemy had been swept off of the banks of the river on the other side, by the fire of the ships, and had even been forced to quit the lines he had held there, the troops were disembarked at noon in the Kipsbay, about 3 miles above New York.

[*Die Deutschen Hülfstruppen in Nordamerikanischen Befreiungskriege*, 1776 bis 1783. Von Max von Eelking, vol. I, fol. 28, seq.]

[1] The troops headed by Cornwallis consisted of the English light infantry, the 33d British and the 42d Scotch regiment; these in conjunction with Donop's brigade formed henceforth almost always the van.

[No. 41.]

Narrative of the Battle of Long Island by a British Historian :

The impression produced and artfully instilled into the minds of the Americans was, that the Howes were afraid of fighting the captor of Boston. At the same time the Gazettes were filled with abuse of the English army and flattering appeals to the American heroes. Washington himself in one of the orders of the day, told his troops that the time was now near at hand which must determine whether they were to be freemen or slaves — whether they were to have any property or none — whether their houses and farms were to be pillaged and destroyed, and themselves consigned to a hopeless state of wretchedness. "Our cruel and unrelenting enemy," continues the order, "leaves us only the choice of a brave resistance or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die." Having at last been joined by Clinton and by nearly all the forces he expected, General Howe, on the morning of the 22d of August, put his army in motion on Staten Island, and first threw forward a division of 4000 men under the command of Clinton, who landed in Gravesend Bay, Long Island, without opposition, their disembarkation being well covered by three frigates and two bombs. Washington reinforced General Sullivan, who was holding the island. Clinton's division was soon followed by the rest of our army, with the artillery; and, upon their landing, Sullivan's advanced guard, which had been hovering in the neighborhood of the landing place, set fire to all the houses and granaries, and fled precipitately to seek cover in the woody heights through which the English must pass.[1] Washington, making a most errone-

[1] We embarked in boats, says Harris, and landed without opposition in Gravesend Bay, then marched six miles inland, and halted, a large body of

ous calculation that Long Island might be held, threw over more and more reinforcements from New York, until the mass of his army was committed on that spot. He gave orders that any soldier attempting to conceal himself, or run from the field, should be instantly shot; and he solemnly promised to notice and reward such as should distinguish themselves. By his direction the Americans, to the number of 15,000, were posted on a peninsula towards that end of the island which faces the city of New York, and is not more than a mile from it: their lines extended almost right across the peninsula from Whaaleboght Bay, an elbow of the East river, on the left, to a deep marsh on a creek emptying into Gowan's Cove on the right: their rear was covered against an attack from the English ships by some batteries on Governor's Island, Red Hook, and Brooklyn-ferry; and there were other batteries on the East River to keep open their communication with the city of New York: in their front they had a strong line of entrenchments secured by abatis, flanked by redoubts, and lined with spears or lances, their centre, at Brooklyn, being made uncommonly strong; and in advance of these artificial works they had, at the distance of some two miles and a half, the natural defences of a range of hills — those to which their advanced guard had fallen back on Clinton's landing — covered with thick woods extending obliquely, nearly all across the island, and intervening between the American lines and Lord Howe's army. Their object was to occupy these heights, and to defend against the English the defiles which led through the hills; and General Put-

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Americans, near us, keeping up a fire from behind walls and trees. Abont 4 P.M., on the 26th we struck tents, and lay on our arms during the night about three miles from Bedford; and, though in summer, it was the coldest night I experienced up to the 25th of November. Such sudden changes of climate are not uncommon here.— *Journal, in Lushington's Life of General Lord Harris.*

nam, whom Washington had sent, with six fresh regiments, to take the command over Sullivan, took post on these wooded hills, so as to stop all the passes. Putnam took post on the left, with his centre nearly opposite to a place on the high road called Flat Bush, and Lord Stirling posted himself on the right near that part of the sea-shore called the Narrows. Washington himself had superintended these dispositions; but, after passing the day of the 26th at Brooklyn in the lines, he had returned at night to New York. General Putnam retired to Brooklyn, leaving Sullivan on the hills in command of the left. That evening the Hessians under General De Heister took possession of the village of Flat Bush, right opposite to Sullivan, whose patrols they engaged and whose attention they distracted. In the meantime Sir Henry Clinton and Sir William Erskine, having reconnoitered Sullivan's position and the whole range of hills, saw it would not be difficult to turn his left flank by crossing the hills, where they were low and unguarded, in the direction of the town or village of Bedford. Upon receiving their report Howe resolved to make a combined movement in three separate columns and in the middle of the night; and he sent Clinton with one column, supported by the brigades under Lord Percy, in the direction of Bedford, and another column, under General Grant, to turn Lord Stirling's position, by passing between him and the sea; and he ordered the Hessians to be ready so as to attack Sullivan, right in front, by a given moment. General Howe marched in person with the first of these columns, which quitted its camp at ten o'clock at night on the 26th of August. The movement was eminently successful, and the troops got close to the hills before they were discovered. At the same time General Grant, who had a much shorter distance to march, went on very leisurely, and at the moment appointed opened a heavy fire of musketry and artillery upon Lord Stirling's

position. This loud roar on their right made both Sullivan and Stirling believe that the main body of the English army were attempting to pass in that direction; — therefore Sullivan hurried reinforcements along the wooded ridge to sustain Stirling who remained on his hill intent only on defending that pass. Grant kept him in play till daylight, by which time Clinton's division, after some slight skirmishing with patrols, gained the pass on the other side of the line; and General De Heister, moving from Flat Bush with his Hessians, had begun a cannonade on Putnam's centre, which was covering the defile in which ran the direct road to Brooklyn. Nearly at the same time Lord Howe put part of his fleet in motion, and began a heavy cannonade on Governor's Island and Red Hook, in the rear of Brooklyn. About eight o'clock in the morning the right of our army got to Bedford, between the fortified lines and the ridge of hills, and a loud fire from Clinton's guns announced to the Americans on the ridge, that the British were in their rear. At the ominous sound they instantly retired from the woods by regiments, hoping to regain their fortified lines and camp at Brooklyn; but they presently encountered the front of Clinton's column, and were driven back again to the hills.[1] Then the Hessians cannonaded them from the other side, took three of their guns, and drove them back again upon Clinton's column, which was now deploying so as to block up every road and foot-path. The Americans again ran back to

[1] Captain Harris, who was engaged, says: — "At day-break, the 27th, the light infantry attacked and forced small posts which the Americans had on the road leading to their lines at Bedford. This appeared to be the first notice they had of our being near to them. About nine we fired two signal guns to a part of the army under General Grant, who was to make a feint in the front of the Americans, while we got round to the rear, and immediately marched briskly up to them, when, almost without firing a shot, they abandoned their post, and retreated to their lines under cover of their guns." —*Lushington's Life of Gen. Lord Harris.*

the heights, but, broken and panic-stricken, they could do no good anywhere; they were knocked down in heaps by De Heister's corps — some laid down their arms — some, running along the ridge between the Hessians and Clinton's column, escaped by the road near the sea-side, some hid themselves in the woods; but a great proportion of their left wing and centre were either killed or taken prisoners. Their right, under Lord Stirling, was equally panic-stricken on hearing Clinton's firing in the rear: they, however, maintained the contest with General Grant until they received news of the total rout of the rest of their army. They then abandoned their position, and ran for their lives across a morass to Mill Creek. It is stated that, if General Grant had moved rapidly to the edge of that morass, and had secured the head of a mill-dam over which they escaped, the greater part of this division must have been either drowned or taken prisoners. But most of them crossed the creek, and thence continued their run to Brooklyn. In their haste, however, they left their commander behind them, for Lord Stirling was taken prisoner by Grant's division.[1] Between the British right, under Clinton, and the Hessians, a great many of the American officers were taken, including General Sullivan and General Udell or Woodhull. The total amount of prisoners was

[1] This William, Earl of Stirling, as he called himself, was the son of a Mr. James Alexander, who had gone out to America in 1714, with the appointment from George I, of surveyor-general for the province of New Jersey. The son, who succeeded to the same office, and also to large estates in New Jersey and New York, came over to England in 1757, after his father's death, when he was a young man of about one and twenty, and in 1759 got himself served nearest lawful heir male to Henry, fifth Earl of Stirling, who had died without issue in 1739. On this he assumed the title, but, his petition to the king having been referred to the House of Lords, their lordships, in 1762, came to a resolution that he had not made out his claim. He still, nevertheless, continued to call himself a lord, on his own authority, and was recognized as such by the American revolutionists, whose cause he joined, and in whose army, on the breaking out of the war, he received a commission as major-general.

1,097, and from 1,200 to 1,500 Americans were killed or wounded. The loss of the British was comparatively trifling, not exceeding 400 men and officers in killed, wounded and taken. In the heat of the action Washington crossed over from New York to the camp at Brooklyn, whence he witnessed the confusion and headlong flight of his troops, whom, in our opinion, he had most unwisely exposed to an unequal contest. He also witnessed, from that ill-omened camp, the ardor of the British troops, who followed the American fugitives almost to the foot of their works, and who were with difficulty prevented from making an assault on their lines — an assault which ought to have been made before the fugitives recovered from their fatigue and panic. But General Howe was of a different opinion, saying, that, though he might carry the lines by assault, yet, as it was apparent that the lines must become his, at a very cheap rate, by regular approaches, he would not throw away the lives of his men; and he ordered them back to a hollow way, out of the reach of the enemy's fire.[1] The British army encamped that night in front of the American lines; and on the following morning, the 28th of August, they began to break ground about six hundred yards from one of the redoubts. They seemed to have been so absorbed by this tedious and laborious occupation, to have had their eyes so bent and fixed upon the earth and their pickaxes, spades, and mattocks — as to have been blind to everything else that was passing; and they kept digging their trenches on one side, while Washington was smuggling his forces out on the

[1] *Stedman.* — *Harris* says in his journal, — "Our men were most eager to attack them in their lines, and I am convinced would have carried them; but we were ordered to retreat out of the reach of their guns, and lay from about 4 P. M. till very near dark at the entrance of a small wood, exposed to the fire of their riflemen. During the whole evening they hit but one man, though their balls continually whistled over our heads and lodged in the trees above us."

other, and ferrying them over East River to the city of New York. It is said, however, that a marvellously thick fog concealed and favored the American general's critical operation. On the night of the 29th, having collected a number of boats, and removed his military stores, with part of his provisions and the lighter part of his artillery, he began to embark his men. When the party first embarked were landed on the New York side, the boats returned for another; and this ferrying occupied several hours, during which Washington, who kept his own person on the New York side of the water, expected every moment that General Howe would burst through his lines at Brooklyn, and take his men in the rear, and that Lord Howe would send some of his ships up the East River to destroy their fragile boats and every hope of escape from Long Island. But the high-feeding English general slept on; and his brother, the admiral, though not so apt to doze, did not move a single ship or boat, and was, to all appearance, unconscious of what was going on. Fort Sullivan may have taught the necessity of caution in attacking such works; but it was not necessary to attempt taking the forts or batteries on Governor's Island and Paulus Hook, or any of the works in front of New York: all that was needed was to pass them, which might have been done with the greatest ease, as was soon shown by two English frigates that despised their fire, ascended the Hudson, and cut off the communication, by water, between Washington's army at New York and the remnant of the army of Canada on Lake Champlain. Nothing but a miracle of negligence, slowness, and stupidity could possibly have saved the forces — the half of his army — which Washington had exposed on Long Island, and, in point of generalship, nothing except the English letting them go when they *were there*, was so miserable as Washington's sending the Americans to that island. But even after his

lucky escape, Washington found himself in a very critical situation; for he not only had a superior, and, to a degee, a victorious force, in front, with a commanding fleet, but all the country round about him was hostile to his cause. On the first appearance of Lord Howe, the people of Staten Island took the oath of allegiance to the British crown, and joyfully offered to serve as volunteers; the people of Long Island were equally loyal; on both sides the Hudson,—in New Jersey, as in New York—the anti-revolutionists began to declare themselves in vast numbers; the whole continent, indeed, between New England and the Potomac abounded with royalists or with very lukewarm republicans, and the city of New York, taken as a whole, was decidedly hostile to Congress. Washington felt that, under all these circumstances, there was no possibility of defending the important city for which he had risked so much — even to putting his whole army in jeopardy.

[*Knight's Pictorial History of England during the Reign of George the Third*, vol. I, p. 271.]

[No. 42.]

Account of the Landing of the British, and the succeeding Engagements, by C. Stedman, an officer serving under Gen. Howe.

The troops under general Clinton, from the southward having joined the grand army, the campaign opened on the twenty-second of August. A division of four thousand men, under the command of general Clinton, landed without opposition in Gravesend Bay, Long Island, to the right of the Narrows, their disembarkation being covered by three frigates and two bomb ketches: This division having landed without resistance, the rest of the army and

artillery were also landed. The advanced party of the enemy fled at the approach of the army, setting fire, on their retreat, to all the houses and granaries, and seeking refuge in the woody heights that commanded the way which the English were under the necessity of passing. The English possessed an extent, reaching from the Narrows through Gravesend and Utrecht. The Americans, to the number of fifteen thousand, were posted on a peninsula, between Mill Creek, a little above Red Hook, and an elbow of the river, called Wallabach Bay. They had constructed strong fortifications opposite to New York, from which they were separated by the East River, at the distance of a mile. A line of intrenchments from the Mill Creek enclosed a large space of ground, on which stood the American camp. This line was not only secured by abatis but flanked by strong redoubts, and lined with spears or lances provided against assault. From this post ten thousand men, under the command of general Putnam, were detached. Their object was to occupy the heights which obliquely intersected the Island, and to defend against the progress of the English, the defiles which led through those hills.

Opposite the centre of Putnam's line stood, in the plain, the village of Flat Bush. To this town the Hessians, under general DeHeister, were advanced, occupying entirely the attention of the Americans, and frequently skirmishing with their patrols. In the meantime sir Henry Clinton and sir William Erskine, having reconnoitered the position of the enemy, saw that it would not be a difficult matter to turn their left flank, which would either oblige them to risk an engagement, or to retire under manifest disadvantage. This intelligence being communicated to sir William Howe, he consented to make the attempt. Accordingly the right wing of the English army moved, consisting of a strong advanced corps, commanded by

general Clinton, supported by the brigades under lord Percy. The commander-in-chief himself marched with this corps, which quitted its camp at nine o'clock at night on the twenty-sixth of August, crossing the country, by Flat Lands, in order to secure a pass over the heights of Guiana, on the road to Bedford. This pass the enemy had neglected to secure by detachments, on account of its great distance. In order to watch it, however, they sent out occasional patrols of cavalry: But one of these being intercepted by a British advanced guard, the pass was gained without any alarm being communicated to the Americans. At nine o'clock in the morning the British passed the heights and reached Bedford. An attack was immediately begun on the enemy's left; they made but a feeble resistance, and retired from the woody grounds to their lines, into which they threw themselves in evident confusion. It is to be lamented that this advantage was not pursued; for in the confusion into which the enemy were thrown by the rapid march of the English army, a most decisive victory would have undoubtedly accrued to the British arms. The works of the enemy could not have resisted an attack, when it is considered that it might have been made by that part of the army under Sir William Howe, which had not been engaged, and which therefore possessed a manifest superiority over troops fatigued by contest, exhausted by hard labor, and disheartened by partial defeat.

As soon as the firing on the enemy's left was heard, general DeHeister, with a column of Hessians from Flat Bush, attacked the centre of the Americans. After a warm engagement the enemy was routed and driven into the woods, with the loss of three pieces of cannon. The left column, led by General Grant, advancing from the Narrows by the edge of the bay, in order to divert the attention of the enemy from the principal attack on the right, about

midnight fell in with their advanced guard, stationed at a strong pass, which, however, they immediately abandoned, and retired to a very advantageous post, where they kept their ground. On the advancement of the English, a furious cannonade commenced on both sides, which was continued with unceasing perseverance till the enemy heard the firing at Bedford. The Americans in this quarter did not attempt to retire until they received news of the total rout of the rest of their army. Apprehensive then of being unable to regain their lines, they made a sudden movement to secure a retreat, by crossing a morass to Mill Creek, which covered the right of their works. But this movement was made in much disorder and confusion; General Grant, however, did not take adequate advantage of it, for had he moved rapidly to the edge of the morass, through which, and over a mill dam, the principal part of them escaped, the greatest number of the detachment, as well as those who fled from Flat Bush, must have either been drowned or taken prisoners.

Thus ended the operations of the day: Victory was certainly on the side of the English; but it was not so decisive as it might have been, owing to the restrictions imposed by the commander-in-chief. The loss of the Americans was great. Two thousand were either killed on the field, drowned, or taken prisoners: And among the latter, Generals Sullivan, Udell and Lord Stirling. The Maryland regiment suffered most severely, having lost upwards of two hundred and sixty men; which was much regretted, as that regiment was composed of young men of the best families in the country. The royal army took six pieces of brass ordnance. The loss on the part of the English did not exceed three hundred in killed and wounded and of which number between sixty and seventy were killed; among the killed was lieutenant-colonel Grant of the fortieth regiment; among the wounded, lieutenant-colonel

Monckton. The British troops, on this occasion displayed great activity and valour. So impetuous was their courage, that it was not without difficulty that they could be restrained from attacking the American lines; and had they been permitted to go on, in the judgment of most men including Sir William Howe himself, they would have carried them. "But," says the general, "as it was apparent that the lines must become ours at a very cheap rate by regular approaches, I would not risk the loss that might have been sustained in the assault, and ordered them back to a hollow way out of the reach of the musquetry."

On the evening of the twenty-seventh, our army encamped in front of the enemy's lines; and on the twenty-eighth broke ground about six hundred yards from one of the redoubts on the left. The Americans finding that it was impossible to maintain their post on Long Island, evacuated their lines on the twenty-ninth, and made good their retreat to New York. At first the wind and tide were both unfavorable to the Americans; nor was it thought possible that they could have effected their retreat on the evening of the twenty-ninth, until about eleven o'clock, the wind shifting, and the sea becoming more calm, the boats were enabled to pass. Another remarkable circumstance was, that on Long Island hung a thick fog, which prevented the British troops from discovering the operations of the enemy; while on the side of New York the atmosphere was perfectly clear. The retreat was effected in thirteen hours, though nine thousand men had to pass over the river, besides field artillery, ammunition, provisions, cattle, horses, and carts.

The circumstances of this retreat were particularly glorious to the Americans. They had been driven to the corner of an island, where they were hemmed in within the narrow space of two square miles. In their front was an encampment of near twenty thousand men; in their

rear, an arm of the sea, a mile wide, which they could not cross but in several embarkations. Notwithstanding these difficulties, they secured a retreat without the loss of a man. The pickets of the English army arrived only in time to fire upon their rear-guard already too far removed from the shore to receive any damage. Sir William Howe had early intelligence sent him of the retreat of the Americans; but a considerable time had elapsed before a pursuit was ordered. Sir William Howe, at length, however, desired Lord Percy to order a pursuit; but it was too late. The enemy had effected their retreat, which was rendered less hazardous from the want of frigates in the East River between Long Island and New York. Had any armed ships been stationed there, it would have been impossible for them to have made their escape. The East River is deep enough for a seventy-four gun ship to ride at anchor. Washington thought himself happy in getting safe with his papers from Long Island, having crossed to New York in a small boat. Had two or even one frigate moored as high up as Red Hook, as the Phœnix and Rose men of war had done before, the one carrying forty-four guns, and the other twenty-eight, the retreat of the Americans would have been cut off most completely; and indeed so decided were the Americans themselves in this opinion, that, had only a single frigate been stationed in the East River, they must have surrendered at discretion. It is to be observed, that in the very same boats in which the Americans crossed from New York to Long Island, they recrossed after their defeat from Long Island to New York, the boats having lain for three days on the Long Island shore in readiness to carry them off. Now it is evident that this small craft, by the above precaution, might have been effectually destroyed.

In reviewing the actions of men, the historian is often at a loss to conjecture the secret causes that gave them birth. It cannot be denied but that the American army

lay almost entirely at the will of the English. That they were therefore suffered to retire in safety, has by some been attributed to the reluctance of the commander-in-chief to shed the blood of a people so nearly allied to that source from whence he derived all his authority and power. We are rather inclined to adopt this idea, and to suppose motives of mistaken policy, than to leave ground for an imagination that the escape of the Americans resulted from any want of exertion on the part of Sir William Howe, or deficiency in the military science. He might possibly have conceived that the late victory would produce a revolution in sentiment capable of terminating the war without the extremity which it appeared to be, beyond all possibility of doubt, in his power to enforce.

[*Stedman's History of the American War*, vol. I, p. 193.]

[No. 43.]

Extracts from Minutes of Testimony of British Officers commanding in the battle of 27th August, before a Committee of Parliament.

EARL CORNWALLIS *Examined by Sir William Howe.*

It is extremely difficult to obtain from the inhabitants a knowledge of the face of the country: it is in general so covered with wood, and so favourable to ambuscades, that reconnoitering can afford but an imperfect knowledge; I never saw a stronger or more defensive country. Our movements were much embarrassed and retarded in the field by the difficulty in getting provisions, and from the closeness of the country. I did not see the enemy's lines at Brooklyn; I was on the left; I never heard it suggested that they could have been carried by assault. It was sup-

posed at that time the enemy's main strength was on York island. I know of no delay in landing on York island; the preparations partly depended on the naval department; nor of any avoidable delay prior to the moving from it.

Examined by other Members. I never heard the enemy at Brooklyn were retiring. There was no getting behind the enemy's lines without forcing them. I do not know these lines were complete; I did not see them during the action; I was detached to Newtown; on my return they were nearly demolished.....

Breadth of the sound between Long island and New York about 1000 or 1200 yards. I know no place where we could have taken post so as to discern what was passing at Brooklyn.....I do not know how near the grenadiers and 33d pursued the enemy to their lines at Brooklyn, or that it required repeated orders to make them desist.

MAJOR GENERAL GREY, *Examined by Sir William Howe.*

The Americans in general so very much against us, they deserted the country wherever we came, and no intelligence could be depended upon. The part I saw is the strongest country I ever was in; everywhere hilly, covered with wood, intersected by ravines, creeks and marshy grounds. Little or no knowledge could be got by reconnoitering. Best calculated for the defensive; every one hundred yards that I have seen might be disputed. Could seldom march but in one column, consequently very slow.

MR. MONTRESOR, *formerly a Captain of Engineers, but lately resigned.* Examined by Sir William and Lord Howe.

It would not have been prudent to have assaulted the lines at Brooklyn, August 27th, 1776. The lines were from Wallabout bay to a swamp that intersects the land between the main and Redhook, which terminates the

lines; one mile and a half extent, including the angles, cannon proof, five redoubts, or rather fortresses, with ditches, as had the lines that formed the intervals..... We should have lost a considerable number of men had we attacked the lines at Brooklyn; after they were evacuated, I was the first person in the works, and had the greatest difficulty with a corporal and six men to get through the abatties where there was no one to oppose me.

Examined by other members. I don't know our numbers the 27th of August, 1776; the enemy 8 or 10,000 men..... At day break, 4 o'clock, I gave the alarm of the evacuation; 25 minutes after the piquets marched. To have carried on the approaches allowing everything prepared would have taken 3 days.....small parties could not discover the enemy going off; only a desperate party would attempt to have looked into a work, or have got to the crest of a work, and they could not discover an evacuation till they were there,.....it would have been improper to have suffered them (the troops) to storm the redoubt, the artillery was not up, no fascines to fill the ditches, no axes for cutting the abatties, no scaling ladders, or proper apparatus for the assault of so respectable a work. The rebel works judiciously planned, but ill executed.....It would have taken 24 hours to have brought up cannon and apparatus to attack Brooklyn redoubt.

Major Gen. Robertson Examined by Lord George Germain.

I have served about 24 years in America.....believe that the few artful men who brought about the declaration of independence, were the only people that rejoiced at it.....I understand more than two-thirds of the people would prefer the King's government to the tyranny of the Congress.....When we landed first on Long island we found all the farms stocked, and most of the people living

in their houses.....Some parties plundered Newtown on Long island. I had them tried; they were sentenced and punished; I sent to the town and desired I might pay the damage. The soldiers were acquainted with this, and never plundered any more.

Examined by other Members. My employment led me to be informed of the resources of the country in different parts of it, and of the nature of those resources.....

Examined by Sir William Howe. Rebel officers informed me that in all at New York and Long Island they were 16,000, (in summer 1776).....The army that came from Halifax to Staten Island might be 6000 men, rank and file. I gave Sir William Howe my reasons against landing on Long island at that time; because the rebels were intrenched and in force on Long Island; we had no carriages; the soldiers must have carried everything we wanted; and every day an army from Europe was expected.....We found a great number of cattle on Long island; when they were taken by the General's orders, I dare say he directed payment, but many were taken he could know nothing of. The inhabitants might be frightened out of Utrecht for any thing I know; but I found numbers in Gravesend and Flatbush.....I know the disposition of the inhabitants; I found them in the places I went to; if any ran away, it was through fear, not disaffection.

Examined by several Members. I commanded at New York, and nobody came in without my questioning them; I took every opportunity, the subject was interesting. I never heard the rebels deserted in corps; but that their militia refused to be drafted, and the rebels brought troops and forced them. A great number of persons, on the defeat of the rebels in Long island declared for govern-

ment.....*Gen. Lee informed me that half the rebel continental army were from Ireland*.....At Brooklyn, Aug. 27th, 1776, a ridge of heights separated us from the rebels; the rebels had possession of these heights; it would have been difficult to have forced them; Gen. Howe by a night march pushed in between these heights and the rebel lines; by this movement we got 2000 prisoners; our troops were going to storm the lines, when Gen. Howe ordered them back. We have since heard these lines were weakly manned, and had only 300 men in them; Putnam having detached all the rest of his 7000 men to the heights; none of us knew this at that time; I do not think storming a proper measure.....At 7 in the morning, I was informed the rebels had evacuated their lines; I dare say it was known earlier at head quarters; their rear guards embarked between 8 and 9; I was ordered to march about 8; distance from the lines to the ferry a mile and a half. *Question.* Had our troops marched at 6 o'clock, might not the rebel rear been cut off?. *Ans.* From our camp to the place where the rebels embarked could not be above an hour's march. *Q.* Could any of the rear guard have embarked and escaped in the face of our troops? *A.* The place of embarkation was disadvantageous to the rebels; it is commanded by heights. If the intelligence had been known at 4 o'clock, [*Montresor proves that it was known at 4 o'clock.*] there was time enough to come up with them. *Quest.* Do you not think it was an object *at that time* to have destroyed as many of the rebel army as possible? *Ans. At all times.*

Examined by Sir William Howe.....When I was marching towards Brooklyn ferry, and came near the rebel lines, I received orders to march to Hellgate, and oppose Gen. Lee who was said to be landed there. Capt. Balfour told me at 7 o'clock the rebels had quitted their lines; I im-

mediately got my brigade under arms; sent notice I was ready; waited for orders to march, and received them about 8 o'clock. I marched within 120 or 130 yards of the enemy's lines; I knew the ground perfectly well; I could not judge of the strength of the lines; I imagine the General called back the troops for the same reason. I understood the grenadiers under Col. Stuart were moving on when they were called back; and that Gen. Vaughan sent to know if he should go on and attack the lines, and Gen. Howe ordered him to retire.

Questions from the Committee. A great many cannon shot flew over us, they were ill pointed; some men were killed and wounded by small arms. *Q.* Do you think if the rebel lines had been forced at that time, all the rebel corps might have been taken or destroyed? *A. All that were on Long Island.*

Extract from a Letter from New York, March 9th, 1777.

* * * * Last August on Long Island we rejected an opportunity of terminating the rebellion; the rebels when defeated ran into their lines in the utmost disorder, our grenadiers were following them with great ardour, when the general after much difficulty, called them off. Had our troops been allowed to go on, not a soul of the rebels would have escaped. A lady, whose husband and brother were rebel officers, has given us the following fact: on their defeat they rushed into the house, and desired her to fly with her child, as they expected every moment to be cut in pieces. She did so; but could not get within a quarter of a mile of the ferry, the rebel crowd was so great, and they were in such trepidation, that those in the rear were mounting on the shoulders and clambering

over the heads of those before them. What a glorious opportunity did Gen. Howe here reject of finishing the war with eclat. We threw away three days in regular approaches, during all which time the rebels were ferrying themselves over, for it was the morning of the 30th before their rear embarked.

Lord Howe could send two frigates up the North river, for a whim of his own, and expose them to the fire of at least 100 pieces of cannon, but he lay almost within sight of the ferry, and let the rebel army cross it, tho' it was a branch of the sea near a mile wide, for three days, or at least two days and a half, without sending any of his numerous squadron to annoy them. I asked a warm friend of the admiral's, why his lordship did not bring his heavy ships against the batteries on the East river, and cut off the rebel retreat, as well as risk his frigates for no purpose up the North river? The reply was, the admiral did not choose to risk his Majesty's ships; thus his lordship will not risk his Majesty's ships; the general will not risk his Majesty's men; for these reasons the rebels escaped, and the rebellion continues.

Every day presents new blunders, we have lost three regiments of Hessians in the Jerseys this winter, and nearly an equal number of our own men from our foraging parties; all from not supporting and protecting our line of cantonment formed last year. Our commander has been enjoying his pleasures while everything has been going to wreck in the Jerseys. What do you think of the favourite sultana's losing 300 guineas in a night at cards, who three years ago would have found it difficult to have mustered as many pence? Don't you think this Boston lady in high luck? As to the husband his various places are reckoned at 6000*l*, a year; it is said he does not save a shilling: but he looks fat and contented.

Remarks on General Howe's own Account of his Proceedings on Long Island, in the Extraordinary Gazette of October 10th, 1779.

* * * Gen. Howe at the head of between twenty and thirty thousand men, and attended by a great fleet, landed on Long Island, a force much superior in number, and much more in discipline to that which opposed him. By a just disposition the outposts were all forced : ten thousand of the rebels, as the general himself counts them were defeated; besides the killed, wounded, and drowned, eleven hundred of them were made prisoners, and the rest fled with the utmost precipitation into their lines, pursued by the victors close up to their trenches. Filled with all the ardour of success, the troops would instantly have entered their camp, when the general thought he had, for that day at least done the rebel army damage enough; and chose to give them time to recover their fright. Let us read his own account of the affair. "The grenadiers and 33d regiment being in front of the column, soon approached within musket shot of the enemy's lines at Brooklyn; from whence these battalions, without regard to the fire of cannon and small arms upon them, pursued numbers of the rebels that were retiring from the heights, so close to their principal redoubt, and with such eagerness to attack it by storm, that it required repeated orders to prevail on them to desist from the attempt. *Had they been permitted to go on, it is my opinion they would have carried the redoubt;* but as it was apparent the lines must have been ours at a very cheap rate by regular approaches, I would not risk the loss that might have been sustained in the assault, and ordered them back to a hollow way, in the front of the works, out of the reach of the musquetry." Can the reader wonder, that the troops were thus eager for the attack, and that it required repeated orders to pre-

vail upon them to desist, when the general himself was of opinion, and every other man plainly saw, that the lines must have been forced, and the whole rebel army taken or destroyed? Even without any previous defeat, the army which attacks another in their trenches, is generally thought to have the advantage.....

The loss of a hundred men, which other generals thought would be the greatest they could sustain in forcing the camp; and the putting an end to the war, by the de[p]letion of the rebel army, would have been the saving of ten thousand brave men's lives, which have been lost by protracting it.

But it was apparent, we are told, that the lines must have been ours at a very cheap rate by regular approaches. Doubtless; — but they helped him to a much cheaper one; and that was to move off, and leave them to him. Were not the same boats, which carried the rebel army from New York to Long Island, lying ready to bring them back from Long Island to New York? Had the admiral destroyed any one of them? Could they wish for more than three days leisure to collect and add to them all the vessels in New York, and the adjacent places, to carry them off? Could he think that they would not exert their utmost diligence to save themselves from the destruction which they hourly expected.....

The expression, "leaving their cannon in all their works," manifestly leads us to conclude, that they did not take any away. If this was the case, and we look to the list of the cannon taken, in what a contemptible light must all these lines, redoubts, and batteries appear. The brass pieces were taken in the rout of the 27th. From that day therefore to the 30th, a great army, with forty pieces of artillery, besides their field equipage, attended by a fleet carrying many hundred guns, are all stopped in the full career of victory, and kept in awe for three days together, by lines, redoubts, and batteries, of *three miles*

extent, containing all of them put together *only twenty-six pieces of iron ordnance.* All these various movements, necessarily attending the retreat and embarkation of ten or twelve thousand men, with the best part of their cannon, baggage and stores, were performed without any the least interruption from either army or fleet, which lay so near: and that too on the very night of a full moon. Either the ships, on one of the foregoing days, could have pushed up beyond the ferry, and prevented that vast transportation; or, they could not; because, I suppose, that the batteries on the two shores, and on Governor's Island, rendered it impracticable. But then the general could not but know this. And the public might have expected that he would have pressed the enemy so much the more, and given them no time to escape from him at land; since he knew he could not intercept their passage at sea. The nation surely need not repent the having put this gentleman at the head of an American establishment for fifty-four thousand troops, attended with ninety-six ships of war.

Extract from "MATTER OF FACT." *Addressed to Lord George Germain.*

* * * * I shall beg your lordship's attention, to the affairs of the town and province of New York. I do not like to treat of public scandal; I will not let fall a single word upon any man's intrigues, where they do not interfere with the public good; where they do, the public has a right to know the cause of supineness and inattention in a general, or of corruption in a commissary. Gaming must ever prove of the very worst consequences in an army, and totally ruinous if the example should happen to be set publicly by the commander: it then destroys

subordination and respect, encourages licentiousness, and all discipline falls of course. A young officer who beholds his general every evening, at a pharo table, I will not say lose his temper, though certainly subject to fret like other men who play a game of chance, in which there can be no amusement but as it gratifies avarice,—I say, the young officer who beholds his general in such a situation, will soon lose the respect to his station, which he has lost to his person, when he is allowed to sport as freely at his elbow on his slender income, as the general does on his princely revenues. He is ashamed not to do it: he expects to make his court by it. There is little economy in an army where high gaming is allowed; it is beneath the man who plays at night for hundreds, to trouble himself the next day, how he is to live upon his pay: he runs in debt for his necessaries, and the country must be plundered to supply his mistress. I ask you, my lord, can the general, or any other officer of rank, pretend to restrain, much less punish, an inferior for plundering, when he perhaps won all the poor gentleman's money the night before? To this cause, perhaps, as much as to the example set by the Hessians, may be attributed the scandalous height to which plundering is arrived at in the army. And yet, my lord, I cannot suppose that this was the cause of officers of very high rank taking large quantities of wine, tobacco, and valuable effects belonging to merchants at New York, who were known to be loyal, and who eagerly embraced the first opportunity of joining the King's troops. This must have been done under the impressions of that favorite idea "that Parliament has declared America to be in rebellion, and that therefore every man in it has *ipso facto* forfeited his estate, and holds it entirely at his Majesty's mercy," that is at the disposal of the army:.....That arch plunderer, Gen. De Heister, offered the house he lived in at New York at public sale, though it was the property of

a very loyal subject, who had voluntarily and hospitably accommodated him with the use of it. This may be nothing astonishing in a Hessian. But I have seen the furniture of good and loyal subjects, men who are suffering restraint or imprisonment among the rebels, sold by public auction; the carriages of gentlemen of the first rank seized upon; their arms defaced, and the plunderer's arms blazoned in their place; and this too by British officers. An officer of high rank took forcible possession of a gentleman's carriage and horses, after it was well known he had received pardon from the King's commissioners: he used it for several months, and was with difficulty prevailed on to give it up. This was acting under the strongest delusion, to speak of it in the mildest terms; not even allowing the King's pardon to save American property from the general passion for confiscation. It was the same officer who made so free with another gentleman's wine, and even offered it in presents by the pipe to his friends: a man, who from ostentation and weakness, has vibrated between the desire of popularity as a magistrate, and the vanity of being considered as a military genius. I conceal his name, because he really has good qualities, which break sometimes through the cloud of imperfections that surround them. I have thus particularized some instances, least your lordships should suspect the truth of my general assertions.

Extract from "Review of the War."

* * * * When he [Gen. Howe] landed on Long island, he neglected to seize the heights above Flat Bush: the rebels knew their importance, and took possession of them at 3 in the afternoon, which he might have done at 10 in the morning. This neglect might have

been fatal to him. He had nearly been induced to attack where he must have failed. But the enemy had their neglects too. Washington's order for securing the Jamaica road was not obeyed. Gen. Howe by a night march occupied that pass; and unperceived by the enemy, got between their army on the heights and their lines. The rebels fled in the utmost disorder. Sullivan owned that when he saw himself surrounded, he desired his men to shift for themselves. This they did with great expedition; and our troops were following the rebel fugitives into their lines, when they were with the utmost difficulty called back by the repeated orders of Gen. Howe. Exclusive of the rebels who were routed, there were only 300 men with Putnam in their lines. There is not the least doubt but our soldiers would have carried them by storm, and in consequence, all the enemy's army on Long island, consisting of 7,000 men, must have been killed or taken. . . .

Without a single movement, we lay 3 days in the face of these lines with 18,000 men eager for battle, and allowed the enemy to ferry themselves over to New York with all their baggage, though their place of embarkation was only a mile and a half from our camp. Lord Howe was equally supine; he lay almost within sight of the ferry, and with the most numerous fleet ever seen in that part of the world, as if he had been sent to cover, rather than to cut off their retreat. Had the two brothers most earnestly desired that the rebel army should escape, it was impossible for them to have acted more properly for the effecting of such a purpose.

Though our commander was now in possession of the heights that commanded Governor's island, he suffered 1500 rebels to go off without the least disturbance. They retired in such fright that they abandoned their cannon; but two days after, finding we did not take possession, they returned and carried them off to New York. Our

chief now composed himself for more than a fortnight, only amusing himself in erecting a battery against a gentleman's house on York island, endeavoring to frighten the rebels with the noise of his cannon, but without doing them any harm. During this time he should have gone up the East river. . . and cut off the rebel retreat by King's bridge, while his lordship with his parade fleet, should have occupied the North and East rivers; these plain and simple movements would have given us all Washington's army, and all the rebel ringleaders almost without firing a gun; for they must have surrendered soon for want of provisions. In this case too, we should have saved the 500 men lost before fort Washington.

But as we were never to be in the right, after giving the rebels 17 days to run away from New York, we crossed the ferry with the most pompous parade to take possession of it. Had we been *wise* and *active*, we might even now have cut off the retreat of rebels by King's bridge, but four weeks were spent at Haerlem, and the opportunity lost, the rebels at last having discovered their dangerous situation. After so much delay, negligence, and blindness, we were at last to do, when all opportunity was gone, what we ought to have done six weeks before. Our infallible Hero, above all good advice, and taking his own way, landed on Frogsneck, Oct. 12th, without ever thinking before hand it was necessary to reconnoitre the ground. The enemy having no intention to dispute this paltry slip of land with him, broke down the bridge that joined it to the main, and looked at him from their entrenchments on the opposite side with no little satisfaction; they had shut him out from the continent; he was now fairly blocked up on the land side.

[*The Detail and Conduct of the American War*, &c., 3d Ed., London, 1780.]

[No. 44.]

Extract of a letter from Philadelphia,

Dated August 31, 1776, Saturday, two o'clock, P. M.

You will no doubt be very anxious to receive a particular account of the late engagement between our troops and the enemy on Long-Island. I wish our information enabled me to relieve you, but at present we are in the most painful state of suspense, the post not having yet arrived, by which we expect full intelligence. From the letters we have received, with what I can collect of others sent to inhabitants of this city, it appears that the enemy, having landed a number of troops on the night of the 26th, and posted them advantageously, without being discovered by our people, and having also posted a part of their Army in a wood, some distance from the main body, proceeded in a heavy column towards our intrenchments. Early on the morning of the 27th, a firing began between our advanced guard and theirs; the enemy, with their middle column, made a feint at our works, and having received a fire, retreated. A brigade of our troops, consisting of the first New-York Battalion, two Pennsylvania, one Delaware, and the Maryland Battalion, under the command of Generals *Sullivan* and *Stirling*, followed the enemy. A very hot fire was kept up. When the enemy had retreated, our troops advanced upon them some distance. The troops of the enemy, posted for that purpose, surrounded our friends and a most savage engagement ensued; no relief could be given from the fort to our troops, without hazarding the post at Long-Island. Thus surrounded with thrice their numbers, galled on one side by Light-Horse, and torn with artillery in front, they bravely fought for several hours; however, after having given the most convincing proofs of their bravery and skill, and having sustained considerable

loss, they were obliged to yield to superior numbers; they were broken, and retreated as well as they could. Many fell by the bayonet, which was pushed with equal obstinacy by the two adverse parties. Our loss is not ascertained—some say five hundred, and some say three. By deserters, the enemy had killed and wounded five hundred. Generals Stirling and Sullivan were both missing, when we last heard from General *Washington*. *Thursday* morning, four o'clock, Colonels *Miles* and *Atlee* were also missing, when our last intelligence was sent. A Colonel *Grant*, of the enemy, was killed; who else of distinction, we have not heard. The enemy, upon the retreat of our brigade, took possession of a very advantageous wood, near our out intrenchment. *Smallwood's* Battalion of *Marylanders* were distinguished in the field by the most intrepid courage, the most regular use of the musket, and judicious movements of the body. All the other Battalions behaved as became *Americans* and men of honor, fighting for their rights of freemen. When our party was overcome and broken, by superior numbers surrounding them on all sides, three companies of the *Maryland* broke the enemy's lines, and fought their way through; the others attempted to cross a small creek, which proved fatal to several of them. I have not heard of their loss, but presume it is very heavy, they being in a situation very much exposed, facing the enemy's cannon, in the open field for a considerable time. Captain *Veazey* and Lieutenant *Butler* are among the honorable slain. I don't hear of any other officers of that battalion being killed or taken. There is a report in town that Lord Stirling got into the camp safe, but I fear it is not true. Since this engagement, there have been frequent skirmishes between our troops and the enemy, the result of which we have not heard. Our posts are now very near to each other, and we expect hourly to hear of a very general engagement.

SATURDAY, *three o'clock* P. M.—By the post arrived just now, we are certainly informed, that our whole Army, the night before last, retreated from *Long-Island* to *New-York*, bringing away the most of their cannon, and spiking what was left. The enemy were taking measures to cut off the communications between the island and the main, and had also got possession of a post from which they could distress our camp at *Long-Island*. Lord *Stirling* and General *Sullivan* are both prisoners. The enemy it is said have lost one thousand men; two Generals of theirs are also killed; they sent a flag to exchange *Sullivan* and *Stirling* for two missing Generals of theirs, but we had them not, so that they must have fell. The *Maryland* Battalion lost two hundred men and twelve officers. Severe fate! It is said our whole loss is five or six hundred.

[*Force, Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, fol. 1243.]

[No. 45.]

Two Narratives of the battle of the 27th Aug. by Soldiers.

New York, Thursday, August 29, 1776.

On *Monday*, by express, and by several other messengers since, we hear an armed brig of the enemy, with two sloops and some smaller vessels, are in the *Sound*, near *White-Stone*, a little above *Hell-Gate*.

Wednesday, in the afternoon, a great hail and rain-storm came on, attended with thunder and lightning; at which time the Ministerial Army attacked our lines on *Long-Island*, at three different places, with their utmost force; but the intrepidity of the soldiers of the *United States*, joined with that vigour becoming a free people, repulsed them; that they were obliged immediately to retreat precipitately, with great loss, the particulars of which we

have not as yet been able to learn. At the same time, some of the *British* men-of-war made an attempt to come up to the city, as they also did the day before, but the wind at both times entirely obstructed them; all their attempts we hope Heaven will still continue to render abortive.

The great, the important day, big with the fate of *America* and liberty, seems to draw near. The *British* troops began to land on *Long-Island* last *Thursday*, nearly their whole force, supposed to be more than twenty thousand *British* and foreign troops. They marched through the small town of *New Utrecht*, in their way to *Flatbush*, another town about five miles from this city, near which they encamped, but were much harassed by our Riflemen. Scouting parties were sent from our Army to the adjoining woods, but were rather scanty in their numbers, considering the extent of ground they had to guard. The *British* forces, in three divisions, taking three different roads, and the advantage of the night, almost surrounded the whole of our out-parties, who, though encircled with more than treble their number, bravely fought their way through the enemy, killing great numbers of them, and brought off some prisoners. The *New-York* First Battalion behaved with great bravery. Lord *Stirling's* brigade sustained the hottest of the enemy's fire; it consisted of Colonel *Miles's* two battalions, Colonel *Atlee's*, Colonel *Smallwood's*, and Colonel *Hatch's* regiments; they were all surrounded by the enemy, and had to fight their way through the blaze of their fire. They fought and fell like *Romans*. Lieutenant-Colonel *Parry*, of the *Pennsylvania* Musketry, was shot through the head as he was giving orders to and animating his men. The major part of Colonel *Atlee's* and Colonel *Piper's* regiments are missing. Dr. *Davis* and his Mate were both taken prisoners as they were dressing a wounded person in the woods. Colonel *Miles* is missing, (a truly amiable character,) and supposed to be slain.

Generals *Stirling* and *Sullivan* are thought to be killed. General *Parsons*, with seven men, came in yesterday morning, much fatigued, being for ten hours in the utmost danger of falling into the enemy's hands. Our killed, wounded, and missing, are imagined to be about one thousand; but, for our encouragement, the missing are hourly coming in. General *Grant*, of the *British* troops, from good intelligence, is among the killed; his hat, with his name on it, was found lying near the dead body; the bullet had gone through the hat, and carried some of his grey hairs with it. Thus fell the hero who boasted in the *British* House of Commons he would march through America with five thousand men, having only marched five miles on *Long-Island*, with an Army of more than four times the number. Our out-guards have retreated to the main body of the Army within the lines. The *British* Army have two encampments about a mile from our lines; and, by their manœuvres 'tis plain they mean to attack us by surprise, and storm our intrenchments. Our men show the greatest bravery, and wish them to come to action. The firing continued yesterday all the day.

On *Tuesday* twenty-two prisoners of the Regulars, among whom is a Captain, a Lieutenant, and an Ensign, were brought over; yesterday another, and the same day thirty-seven prisoners more were taken by one of our detached parties. On *Tuesday*, five or six ships stood almost within reach of our grand battery, but came to an anchor, and yesterday morning dropped down again to the fleet.

The alarm was so great last *Tuesday*, (occasioned by the attack of the British troops,) the day appointed for fasting, humiliation, and prayer, in this State, for imploring Divine assistance in forming the New Government, that the churches were not opened, nor public worship performed.

[*American Archives*, fol. 1212, vol. 1, 5th Series.]

New York, August 29, 1776.

On *Tuesday*, *August* 20, a number of ships, with troops on board, sailed from the *British* fleet at *Staten-Island*, through the *Narrows*, and next day were followed by many more. Next morning, the (22d,) a number of troops, supposed to be about ten thousand men, landed between *New Utrecht* and *Gravesend* on *Long-Island*.

On *Friday*, an advanced party took possession of *Flatbush*, where our people, having possession of the surrounding heights, kept a continual, though irregular, fire upon them, but at too great a distance to do much execution; however, some were killed and wounded on both sides; the enemy keeping up an almost constant fire upon our people from their mortars and field-pieces, loaded with grape-shot, &c. On *Sunday*, some of their men-of-war and transports got under sail, and it was supposed, were coming up; but it soon appeared they only went to cover the landing of more of their men on *Long-Island*, when great numbers of our men went over to strengthen our posts, and oppose the enemy. On *Monday*, it was observed that a large body of them, supposed to be near four thousand, were marching from their main body to their advanced posts. That night our people began to throw up intrenchments on the highest hill near *Flatbush*, which would have commanded the town; but the enemy having the same night formed a design to gain possession of the hill, it is said, both parties met, and a smart engagement between them began about four in the morning, and continued, together with severe skirmishes between many detached parties, all *Tuesday* and *Wednesday*, during which many were killed, wounded, and taken prisoners on both sides, and several are missing. Who kept possession of the hill at *Flatbush*, where the flag is still flying, we have not heard, nor which party has upon the whole the advantage.

Many of our wounded people have been brought over. On *Tuesday*, twenty-two prisoners of the Regulars, among whom is a Captain, a Lieutenant, and an Ensign, were brought over; yesterday another, and the same day fifty-seven prisoners more were taken by one of our detached parties. The enemy attempted several times to force our lines, but were always repulsed with considerable slaughter, notwithstanding their superiority in point of discipline, and an extended front. On *Tuesday*, five or six ships stood almost within reach of our grand battery, but came to an anchor, and yesterday morning dropped down again to the fleet.

From the best accounts, we learn that the force of the Ministerial Army at *Staten* and *Long Islands* is about twenty-three thousand five hundred men; marines unknown. The fleet consists of the following: Ships *Asia* and *Eagle*, of sixty-four guns, the *Roebuck* and *Phœnix*, of forty-four, one bomb, and about twenty frigates and sloops-of-war. They have also about three hundred sail of transports, storeships, and prizes.

[*Force, Archives,* vol 1, 5th Series, fol. 1213.]

[No. 46.]

Extracts from President Stiles' Diary.

Aug. 27. ♃ . . . Report by a Vessel that when she left N. York last Thursdy, an action was supposed to be begun as Fireing was heard at the W. End of Long Island. The Rhode Island Gallies are returned to Newp^{t} they left N York on Wedn^{y} last week, when it was said the Troops on Staten Isl^{d} were striking their Tents. Much erroneous news! . . .

Aug. 29. ♃ . . . . We have a flying Report that the Kings Troops, 12.000, have landed at Long Island. . . .

Aug. 31 ☽ This afternoon we have certain Information by the Provid.ˉ paper containigˉ Extracts from N York paper — that on Thursday 22d Inst Genˉ Howe landed Ten Thousd Kings Troops on L. Isd near Utrecht. . . .

Sept 2 ☉ In the Paper, N. York article 26 Augt. "Tuesday last (Aug. 20.) a number of Ships wth Troops on board sailed from Staten Isld out of the Narrows; next day they were followed by many more; and abot ten *o'clock Thursdy* (*Aug.* 22) *morning about* 10.000 (*ten thousd*) *men landed between New Utrecht & Gravesend on L. Isld.* Friday a party of them came & took possession of Flatbush, which imedy bro't on a very hot fire from our Troops, who are advantageously posted in the Woods, & on every Eminence round that place."

Lett. dated N York, Aug. 25, 1776.

"Yesterdy I was at Flatbush — their advanced Guard of about 1000 Men, whom our Troops were continually fireing at, & they returng the complt." . . .

This day, Sept. 2d about XI A. M. we received at Dighton the news of a grand Battle at New York on Long Isld. which is confirmed repeatedly this afternoon. This Evengˉ Mr Adam Babcock told me he this day at Dartmouth saw Capt Coit, who told him that last Saturday at Stonington he saw an Express from Genˉ Washington to Govr Trumble, which left N York on Friday last, via Long Isld to N London carried by the tide to Stonington. This Express told him, that on Thursday last (29th Aug) a Detatchmt of 2000 Kings Troops attacked us at Red Hook, & were repulsed. Imedy came on the same a general action between it was supposed, 18000 Kings Troops & 22,000 American Troops on L. Isd; in which we lost many, as it was supposed 5000 — that we kept our Ground & that G. Washington was removed over upon L. Isld. From all

which I collect that there has been a very bloody Battle. The enemy were entrenching within Musquet shot of our Army. The Good Lord support & sustain us in this trying Period! Mr. Babcock judges that not above 16 Thous^d^ Connecticut Troops actually at N York.— That the last marchg on the W. side Connect^r^ River did not exceed 8000. He judges the whole American Army at New York may be Fourty Thous^d^ effective Men. It is said most of the Men in the great Battle last Thursdy were New Engl^d^ Men. . . .

Sept. 3. ♂. . . This Eveng^r^ a Newport paper of yesterday came to Town. In which is an Extract of a Lett. dated N York Aug. 19." . . . . . A Deserter from the Enemy yesterdy says, that 5000 men are to attack Long Isld, & the rest New York on Tuesday next. . . . "

Report this Eveng^r^ that the Kings Troops carry all before them: have all Long Isld, and are attackg N York City. Tory News.

Sept. 4. ☿. A Newport man this day saw the post, which informed him that they had news at Providence, where the Assembly is now sitting, that our Loss in the Battle last Thursday, was about *five hundred killed* — another Acc^o^ from Newport says 563 killed. Uncertain, but probable.— The Newport Tories have sent abroad in the Country several ways a report briskly circulating, that the Kings Troops have got all L. Isld & are besieging New York itself. . . . . .

5. ♃. Set out for Rh. Isld. Mr. Fisher this day from Providence, brings certain Acc^o^ that G. Washington had withdrawn our Troops from Long Island and that Geñ Sullivan & Geñ Ld Stirling were taken by the Enemy. I lodged at D^r^ Turners.

Sept. 6. ♀ Came to Newport. All in Sollicitude about the Evacuation of L. Isld. Tories rejoycing — Sons of Liberty dejected

7. ♄ A Long Isld man just from thence says, the West End sent a Comittee to Ld Howe (of which his Brother was one) — and Ld Howe will not molest them if neuters or lay down Arms, & he will pay for provisions. A number of Tories (say 600) joyned the Kings Troops & took arms against us. Long Isld evacuated the night of 29th ult.

. . . 9 ☽ We have fought better on L. Isld than I feared— it is cursorily said we have lost 800 killed & taken. . . .

10. ♂. Report that Ld Howe by Genˡ Sullivan offers proposals to Congress — that America remain independent, that if G. Britain shall be aided with men from hence she shall pay us — that if we need assistˢ from thence, we shall pay them.— Incredible. Monday last Week the Enemy had not taken possession of our deserted Lines on L. Isd, but were encamped, say within one mile of them — had not bombarded the City.

11. ☿ . . . . This day I conversed with Capt Sears of N York the famous Patriot — he said, he came from N Y since the Evacnˢ of L Isld: — that the first Landg of the Regulars on L. Isld & Encampᵗ at Flatbush was but 6000 (tho' called 10,000 in the prints): — that our Forces on L. Isld never exceeded *seven Thousand* — that we had 10,000 at Kings Bridge, 10,000 at the City, & 10,000 in the middle of the Isld of N York, & 12,000 on Jersey side: — that the Enemy did not attack Red Hook, that on the day of principal Action, a Debarkᵃ was perceived but judged small, we little tho't of its being the main body: — that we attacked with about three thousand & fought well, but were surprized by findg ourselves flanked & interupted by large body of that days Landing. I observed that we had great Confidence in our Generals and their Arrangᵗ of the Army; but it was a matter of inquiry, why we had so few forces on L. Isld, and why in the Battle it should have been said, the enemy exceeded us in numbers? He replied, that was known from the beginᵍ

that if the main body of the Enemy landed on L. Isld, it would not be tenable by us; that if the body landed elsewhere, we had Troops enoʼ to keep the Isld against a Detachment &c.

Mr Robt Stevens returng from Carolina was at N. York beging July, visited his intimate Friend Geñ Green at L. Isld — & being told they had there but 5000 he asked the General the Reason, & the Geñ told him, it was well known if the Enemy landed their main body there, the Isld was not tenable. Mr Stevens told me this to day.

17. ϑ . . . . . Actions and Battle on Long Isld N. York Augt 26 &c.

Collection of Accounts.

"N. York Aug 28. It is said the Enemy on L. Isld have been reinforced & are now supposed to be 20,000 strong. Yesterday several Skirmishes happened between our Troops & theirs; but we cannot obtain any particular Acco; all we can learn is, that we have taken 22 prisoners — belonging to the Marines, & Major Cudgjo, Comander of Ld Dunmores black Regiment: *Never did Troops behave with greater Courage & Resolution than ours* did on the Occasion. They *made several attacks on our Lines*, but were *repulsed* with considerable Loss, &c"

N York Aug. 28, 8 o'clock P. M. "This minute returned from our Lines on L. Isld, where I left his Excellv the General. From him I have it in comand to inform Congress, that yesterday he went there & continued till evengˆ, when, from the enemy havg landed a considerable part of their forces, many of their movements, there was reason to apprehend they would make in a little time a general attack. As they would have a Wood to pass thro' before they could approach the Lines it was thoʼt expedt to place a number of men there on the different Rodes —. This being done, early this mornG (Aug 27.)

a smart Engagm^{t} ensued between the Enemy & our Detatchment w^{e} *being unequal* to the force they had to contend with sustained a pretty considerable Loss, at least many of our men are missing, among those that have *not returned are Genl Sullivan and Ld Stirling.*—Our party bro^{t} off a Lieu^{t} Serg^{t} & Corporal with 20 privates prisoners. While these Detatchm^{t} were engaged, a *column* of the Enemy descended from the Woods, & marched towds the Center of our Lines, with a Design to make an Impression, *but were repulsed.* This Evenĝ they appeared very numerous about the Skirts of the Wood, where they have pitched several Tents:—To day five Ships of the Line came up towards the Town &c—; and on my Return this evenĝ I found a Deserter from the 23d Reg^{t} who informed me that they design, as soon as the Wind will pmit them, to come up to give a severe Canonade & to silence our Batteries if possible."

Long Isld "Wednesday, daybreak. "I have the pleasure to inform you I have survived a very warm Engag^{t} yesterday (Tuesdy 27th Aug). Our Battalion has suffered much—we retreated thro' a very heavy Fire & escaped by swimming over a River or Creek rather; my height was of service to me as I touched almost all the way. Numbers of men got drowned—We are now all safe in our Lines and Forts. *The affair yesterday was* only a *Skirmish on the Isld, about three miles from our Works.* The particulars, I cannot give you, but we were decoyed, & at once surrounded I am confident by *ten thousd men.*

Another Letter Aug 27.

"Yest^{y} abo^{t} 120 of our men went as a Guard to a place called Red Lyon on Long Isld. About *eleven o' Clock at night* (Aug. 26) the centries descried 2 men—our men fired upon them: the Enemy then retreated & about one o'clock (Aug. 27. manè) advanced with about 2 or 300 men, &

endeavored to surround our Guard: but they being watchful gave them 2 or 3 fires & retreated to alarm the remainder of the Battalion, except 1 Lieu^{t} & about 15 men who have not been heard of as yet. About four o'clock this morning the Alarm was given by beating to Arms; when the remainder of *our Battalion*" (Col. Attle's Pensylv^{a} Battal^{n}) accompanied by the Delaware & Maryld Batallions went to the place where our men retreated from. About a q^{r} of a mile on this side, we saw the Enemy when we got into the Woods (our Batt^{n} being the advanced Guard) amidst the incessant fire of their field pieces loaded with Grapeshot, which continued till ten o'clock. The Marylanders on their Left flank & we on their Right kept up a constant fire amidst all their canon, & saw several of them fall: but they being too many for us, we retreated a little & then made a stand. Our L^{t} Col. Parry was shot thro' the head, & I was under a necess^{y} of retreating with him to this place — since which I have heard the enemy are within 600 yds of our Lines."—

Lett. N. York Aug 27.

"I sit down to write in the midst of Confusion to tell you that our pple have been engaged with the Enemy on L. Isld all this morning,— our men on the Isld behave bravely. Heaven send them victory.

"Thirty five minutes past Twelve noon. Firing still continues with Intermission. A man o' war comg up s^{d} to be the Roebuck &c.

"P. S. The first Batt^{d} of N York Col Lashley and the *Pensylv^{a}* & *Maryl^{d} Batallions*, behaved with the greatest Bravery even to a fault. They were comanded by Ld Stirling.— We forced the enemy into their Lines."

Lett. N York Aug 28.

Yesterdy proved a distressing one on L. Isld — great numbers killed on both sides. — The Generals Sullivan,

Stirling & Parsons went out of the Lines too far & were all missing this morning, with many others.— On the whole I believe our Troops behaved with spirit and have not yet given way in their skirmishg to any equal number of the enemy"

Lett. N York Aug 30.

"In a Council of War yesterday, it was determined that our Lines on Long Isld. were not tenable & therefore the Council concluded to evacuate them. Ld. Stirling & Genl Sullivan are prisoners. Gen. Howe allowed Gen Sullivan a Flag, by which he informed us of this & that he was politely treated."

Lett. N. York, Augt. 31.

"You are no doubt surprized to hear of our sudden Retreat from L. Isld, but was thought absolutely essential from our Situation. We were under a necessy of marchg out & attackg them upon their own Ground, or sufferg ourselves to have been starved into a Surrender. First. because they were entrenching within 500 yards of our Lines — and 2dly because their *Shipping might have run up the E. River & cut off* our Resources of provision & every other necessary. The Retreat was conducted with the greatest Secresy & by six o'clock in the morng we had every Thing embarked. There never was a man that behaved better upon the Occasion than G. Washgt. he was on horseback the whole night, & never left the ferry stairs till he had seen the whole of his Troops embarked."

Lett. N. York Sept. 1.

"Last Monday Morng (Aug 26) we went over to Long Isld, and about midnight we were alarmed by the Return of some of our scouting parties, who advised us that the English were in motion & comg up the Isld with several

Field pieces. It was generally *that not to be the main body;* but only a detatch[t] with a view to possess themselves of some advantageous Heights. Upon which near *Three Thousand* men were ordered out, consisting chiefly of the Pensylv[a] & *Maryld Troops* to attack them on their march. *About Sunrise* we came up with a very large Body of them. The Delaware & Maryl[d] Battalions made one party. Col. Atlee with *his Battalion* a little before us had taken post in an Orchard — and on the approach of the Enemy he gave them a very severe Fire, which he bravely kept up for a considerable Time, until they were near surrounding him when they retreated to the Woods. The Enemy then advanced towards us, upon which Ld *Stirling*, who comanded, imediately *drew up in a Line & offered them Battle in the true English Taste. The British Army then advanced within about* 200 *yards of us, and began a heavy fire from their canon & mortars*, for both the Balls & Shells flew very fast, now & then taking off a head. Our men stood it amazingly well, not even one of them shewed a Disposition to shrink.

Our orders were not to fire until the Enemy came within *fifty yards* of us, but when *they perceived we stood their fire so cooly & resolutely* they declined coming any nearer, altho' *treble our number*. In this situation we *stood from sunrise to Twelve o'clock*, the Enemy firing upon us the chief part of the time, when *the main Body of their Army*, by a Rout we never dreamed of, had intirely surrounded us, & drove within the Lines, or *scattered in the Woods* all our men, *except the* Delaware *&* Maryl[d] *Battalions*, who were standing at Bay *with double their Number*. Thus situated we were ordered to attempt a Retreat by *fighting our Way thro' the Enemy, who had posted* themselves & nearly *filled Every Field & Road between us & our Lines*. We had not retreated a quarter of a mile before we were fired upon by an advanced party of the Enemy, & those upon our Rear were

playing upon us with their Artillery. Our men fought with more than Roman Virtue, and I am convinced would have stood until they were shot down to a man. We found the advanced party, which first attacked us, to give way, thro' which opening we got a passage down to the side of a *Marsh*, *seldom* before waded over, *which we passed* & then *swam a narrow River; all the time exposed to the fire of the Enemy.* The companies comanded by Captains Ramsay & Scott were in the front and sustained the first fire of the Enemy, when hardly a man fell.

The whole of the right wing of our Batalion thinkg it impossible to pass thro' the Marsh, attempted to force their way thro' the Woods, where they were almost to a man killed or taken. The Maryld Battallion has lost *Two hundred and fifty nine men*, among whom are 12, officers — who of them are killed, or who are prisoners is yet uncertain. Many of the Officers lost their Swords & Guns. We since intirely abandoned Long Isld, bringing off all our Military Stores. Generals *Sullivan & Stirling* are both prisoners. Col. Atlee, Miles & Piper are also taken. There are about 1000 Men missing in all. We took a few Prisoners. By a Lieutenant we took, we understand they had about 23,000 men on the Isld that morning. Most of our Generals were on a high Hill in our Lines viewing us with Glasses. When we began our Retreat, *they could see the Enemy we had to pass thro', tho' we could not.* Many of them tho't we would surrender in a body, without firing. When we began the attack, Gen Washington — cried out, *Good God! what brave Fellows I must this day lose!* Major Guest comanded the Maryld Batallion, the Col° & L^{t} Col° being both at New York. Captains Adams and Lucas were sick. The Major, Capt Ramsey, & L^{t} Plunket *were foremost & within fourty yds of the Enemys Muzzels when they were fired upon* by the Enemy, who were chiefly under Cover of an Orchard, save a few that shewed

themselves, & pretended to give up, clubbing their Firelocks until we came within that Distance, when they imẽdy presented & blazed in our faces; they intirely overshot us & killed some men away behind in the rear. I had the Satisfaction of dropping one of them the first fire I made. I was so near I could not miss. I discharged my Rifle seven times that day as deliberately as ever I did at a Mark & with as little Perturbation."

This is the best account I have seen All these letters sent to Philad[a] & published there.

Prints N York Article Aug. 29.

"Wednesdy in the afternoon (28 Aug.), a great hail & rain storm came on, attended with Thunder & Lightg at which Time the *ministerial Army attacked our Lines on L. Isld at three different places* with their utmost force. But the intrepidity of the Soldiers of the United States, joyned with that Vigour becomg a free pple, *repulsed them;* that they were obliged imẽdy *to retreat precipitately with great Loss:* the particulars of w[e] we have not as yet been able to learn. At the same time some of the British Men of War made an attempt to come up to the City, as they also did the day before, but the Wind at both Times intirely obstructed them—The British Troops began to land on L. Isld last Thursdy (22 Aug), nearly their whole Force, supposed to be more than 20,000 British & foreign Troops. They marched thro' the small Town of Utrecht, in their Way to Flatbush, another T[o] about *five Miles from this City*, near which they encamped, but were much harrassed by our Riflemen. *Scoutg parties were sent* from our army *to the adjoyning Woods, but were rather scanty in their numbers*, considg the Extent of Ground they had to guard. The *British Forces in three Divisions, taking three different Rodes* & the Advant[a] of the Night, *almost surrounded the whole of our Out-parties*, who, tho' encircled with

more than treble their number, bravely fought their Way thro' the Enemy, Killing great numbers of them & bro't off some prisoners. The N *York first Battalion* behaved with great Bravery. Ld *Stirlings Brigade* sustained the hottest of the Enemys Fire, it consisted of *Col. Miles's two Battalions*, Col. Atlee's, Col. Smallwoods, & Col. Hatch's Regiments: they were all surrounded by the Enemy, & had to fight their way thro' the Blaze of their fire — they fought and fell like Romans! — L^{t}. Col. Barry of the Pensylv^{a} Musquetry was shot thro' the head, as he was giving orders to & animatg the men. The major part of Col. Atlees & Col. Piper's Reg^{ts} are missing. D^{rs} Davis & Mate were both taken prisoners as they were dressg a wounded pson in the Woods. Col. Miles is missing (a truly amiable Character) & supposed to be slain. Generals Stirling & Sullivan are tho't to be killed. General Parsons, with seven Men came in yesterday (28th) morning much fatigued being for ten hours in the utmost Danger of falling into the Enemies hands. *Our killed wounded & missing are imagined to be about* 1000; but for our Encourag^{t} the *missing are hourly coming* in. General *Grant of the British Troops*, from good Intelligence is *among the killed;* his Hat with his name on it was found lying near the dead Body: the Bullet had gone thro' the Hat & carried some of his grey hairs with it. Thus fell the Hero, who boasted in the British House of Comons, he *would march thro' America with five Thous^{d} men, having marched only five miles on L. Isld with an Army of more than four times the number. Our out-guards have retreated to the main body of the Army within the Lines.* The British Army have *two encampm^{ts} about a mile from our Lines* & by their Manœuvres, tis plain they mean to attack us by surprise, & storm our entrenchments. Our men shew the greatest Bravery, & wish them to come to action. The Firing continued yest^{y} (28) all day.

On Tuesday (27) twenty-two prisoners of the Regulars, among whom is a Cap^{t}, a L^{t}, & an Ensign, were brot over. Yesterday (28) another, & the same day thirty seven prisoners more were taken by one of our detatched parties. On Tuesdy (27) 5 or six ships stood almost within reach of our Grand Battery but came to an anchor, & yest^{y} morng dropt down again to the fleet.

The *Alarm was so great last Tuesdy* (27) occasioned by the attack of the British Troops) the *day appointed for Fasting*, Humiliation & prayer in this State (N York) in forming the new Governm^{t} *that the Churches were not opened* nor public Worship performed."

End of N York Article.

" Col. Grant & a number of other Officers of the Enemy were Killed. Geñ Sullivan is wounded in the Leg, & a prisoner; Brigadier Geñ Ld Stirling is missing, & Brig^{r} Geñ Parsons was surrounded in a swamp & narrowly escaped." Lett N Y. 29. Aug^{t}.

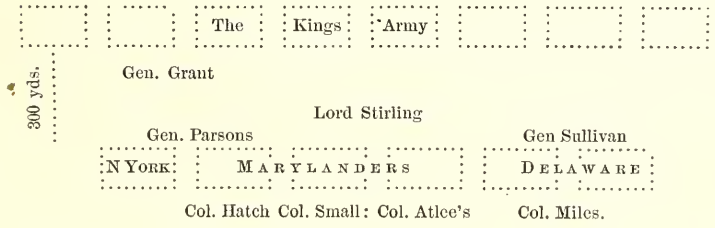
No Paper printed at N York since 29 Aug^{t}.

The Geñ Congress have ordered three Posts every Week thro' the Continent — to ride night & day — a Rider for every 25 or 30 miles.

In Congress 30 Aug^{t} 1776.

From the preceding Accounts respecting the Transactions on Long Isld, I collect, 1. That the Kings Troops began landing there 22 & 23 of Aug^{t}. and by 27th had their main body landed, perhaps 15 or 16 Thous^{d} (tho' it is sd 20 Th.) for they must have left one Third of their Army at Staten Isld. 2. That on the Morning of Tuesday 27th Aug^{t} being on Fast-day, we sent out phps 3 or 4000 at most, as out-guards & advanced parties to harrass & obstruct the Enemy's Approaches, & so to retreat within the Lines. 3. That they when out meditated a Field fight (contrary to the primary Design) and a part of them boldly cast themselves into that form arranging our lines of

Battle accordingly; & that the Enemy ranged their Line of Battle 300 yds from ours. 4. That in this manner we stood for six hours till Noon, without giving our fire & yet receivg the canonade of the Enemy's Artillery. 5. That previous to this one of our Regiments had a warm Action in the Woods & behaved well. 6. That the Enemy outgeneralled us by a covert March of one of their 3 columns so as to encircle & surround our main body, which had hitherto stood ready for action but hitherto without fighting. 7. That thereupon, instead of surrendering our men fought their Way thro' heroically and valiantly, so that about three Quarters got home to the lines — for subsequent Account make our missing 7 or 800. Again, 8. While we lost two Generals taken, the Enemy had one General Killed the infamous Gen Col. Grant. It is said he was slain by our Geñ Parsons. This the state of the Actions Tuesday — the Enemy having succeeded to drive us within our Entrenchments — This the Enemy undoubtedly consider as a great Victory. But 9. On Wednesdy 28th Aug^{t}. the Enemy met with a Repulse at our Lines, very heavy & discouraging: and as to Loss on their side very great & far beyond ours on the 27th. Fame says 2000 — suppose 3 or 400 Killed. On the 29th indeed we evacuated L Isld — but on the whole, we may be satisfied — at least not so mortified as if we had been driven off thro' Cowardice & without good fighting. We may conjecture the Position of the Armies Tuesdy noon, thus



Undoubtedly this Exemplar is not exact. But there were three Regiments & 3 Battalions, equal to six Battalions of, say, 500 effective men each; making a Corps of about three Thousand — a proper & suitable Body to reconoitre and harrass, but not give pitched Battle to Ten or 15 Thousd.

Oct. 14. . . . Major Lamb of N. York, is just returned from his Captivity at Quebec where he was taken when Geñ Montgom^{y} was slain. I saw him at Stratford. He lay on board ship at N. Y. some Time. He tells me the regulars said on board his ship, they had lost *four hundred killed on* L. Isld besides wounded; which agrees with Ld Howes say that he had lost Eighteen hundred brave Men there — for if 400 were killed, 1800 were damaged. . . .

Nov. 4. . . . Account of Action on Long Isld Aug^{t}. last from a Spectator in a Lett. dated Sept. 14, 1776.

" On 23^{d} of Aug^{t} before day the Enemy began to land a Body of Troops at Utretch. The morng was foggy. They were discov^{d} to be still landg after sunrise. By abot two o'clock they reached Flat Bush, where they were met by a Body of our pple who skirmished with them to advantage. After that we kept a Picket Guard of fifteen hundred men between *Flat Bush* and *Brockland* in the Woods and on Eminences, who were continually skirmishg with the enemy — [1] From the southermost part of the Bay below Bushwick in a Line drawn fr. 9 strait on a little to the left of 7, down to the creek running up to & by Brockland, were our Lines & Forts by w^{e} we had enclosed a Tract of Land to the Westward next to N. York.— Our Lines fronted the East. On the Left near the lowest part of the above described bay was Fort *Putnam*, near the middle Ft. *Green*, & towds the creek F^{t} *Box;* the whole were composed of Forts, Redoubts, Breast-works &c.

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[1] Vide *Brown's Atlas.*

On Monday Night about five thousand of the Enemy, with fifty or 60 Lighthorse, filed off to the right up to Bushewick, crossing the Land & makg a circuit to avoid our advanced posts, with a Design of falling upon our Left. We had made the Rodes leading to our Lines from the diffr adjacent Tos. quite inconvenient or unsafe. A *heavy Detatchment* marched on *Tuesdy morng before day from the Narrows to attack our advanced Guards* on that Quarter, & on comg up with began to engage them. On that Ld *Stirling went off with about twelve hundred* men to support them. Ere he arrived the Enemy Landed a Body of about *three Thousd* in the small Bay just below the mouth of the Creek; wc obliged him to form his men *into two Lines*, meeting in an obtuse Angle, one *stretching up to the Creek between the Regulars & Brockland*, the other leading away from that where it formed the Angle towards Flat Bush & was joyned by a number of the picket Guard. Ld. *Stirling began to Engage the Enemy a little after sunrise.* About 2 hours after that, between IX & X, the *five Thousd that had marched all night, and taken a circuit to Bushwick*, fell upon the Rear of our North Rode picket Guard under Geñ Parsons, wc occasioned another Body of our Men under Geñ Sullivan to advance that way with a View of supportg them. A great part of the No Rode Picket Guard fought their Way down to the Creek. The Hessians marched over the Flatbush Plains & formed a middle Line in such a Direction as to prevent G. Sullivans getting into our Lines in the usual Way; and his men were therefore obliged to cross the Creek at the upper part, next to a Mill Dam. Ld. Stirlings Men after having fought a long while forded the mouth of the Creek next to the Bay; when the five Thousd had got down to the right of our Lines next to the Creek, they made an attack *but were repulsed.* The Line between Box fort & the Creek was not compleated the day before. There was an opening adjoyning to the Creek, wc it was tho't

the Enemy was acquainted with; for when they came to it, & found the Entrance closed with a Breast work & other Defences, they appeared confounded, however *they made the attack with one party*, and then *with another*, supposed with a view chiefly of carrying off the dead & wounded under cover of the fire: our pple found afterwards about a hundred packs. My Informer rode down to the Troops in this part of the Line with a message from an Officer more to the left who saw the movement of the Enemy, intimatg his apprehension that they would be attackt, & they were in immediate Readiness. The Enemy proposg to cut off & and make Prisoners as many of our men as possible, pressed hard upon them; we had great numbers in a salt marsh near the Creek, who were fired upon without having more than one killed. The Enemy's Fire did but little Execution, the Balls flying generally over the heads of our pple. Several of our men havg no chance of escaping otherwise betook themselves to the Woods, & afterwards came in. When the Engag^{t} began our Lines were thinly mann'd but some Regim^{ts} being called in & others bro't over from York, there was a sufficient number before an Attack could be made. *All our Troops, to whatever Colony belonging, behaved admirably well;* & I apprehend have given such Specimens of true Bravery, as will if possible be a stronger proof of our real Courage, than Breed's (generally miscalled Bunkers) Hill Engagement. Gen Sullivan & Ld Stirling were taken Prisoners. General (the noted Colonel who reprobated the Americans as not having a single Quality of the good Soldier) Grant, and Gen. [Jones] were killed on the part of the Enemy. We lost six field pieces includg 2 Howitz; Our Artill^{y} men behaved heroically. (Four Southern Reg^{ts} suffered a large Body of the Enemy to advance upon them till within about thirty yards, owing to their having their Firelocks club'd. Upon their being told that if they came forward they sh^{d} be fired upon, &

being required to declare their design, they presented & fired as soon as possible; our pple returned it & kept up such a fire as obliged them to fall back] Gen. Howes plan seems to have been well laid. Apprehend that he was in hopes of drawg out the Body of our troops from the Lines, by attackg our Picket Guards in the neighborhood of Flatbush, & that being done, to get, into our Lines by means of the 5000 he marched to Bushwick; or of surroung & overpowerg those that were out of the Lines, shd he not succede to the utmost of his Wishes. An Assailant with a superior force, as was the case with Howe, has greatly the Advantage, being master of his own plan, whereas the opposing party must act wholly conjecturally in defendg themselves & resistg the Enemy. Notwithstandg which, the Resolution & Prudence of the Provincials baffled the European Generals, & tho' the kind interposition of Heaven blasted their intended triumph over the Yankees.

On Wednesdy in a heavy shower of Rain the *Enemy attackt our Lines between Ft. Putnam & Ft Green;* our men were directed & readily complied, to lie upon the ground with their bodies over their Firelocks, so that the Enemy got repulsed.

His Excellcy Gen. Washington observg a movmt in the Fleet & suspectg that there was a design of cuttg off the comunica with the City, without wch our forces could not be supported many days, & considg that on the Land side we were shut in within our Lines, most wisely *concluded upon evacuating the Isld:* He concealed his Intention while he got the Boats &c ready, and on the Thursday was over with them in the Eveng about seven o'clock. The Brigades were ordered to be in Readiness with Bag & Baggage to march at such a Time, but Knew not for where or what; the second did not know where the first was gone, nor the third the second; the last marched off at the firing of the three o'clock Gun on friday morning. Providence

favoured us. The night was remarkably still; the Water was as smooth as Glass, so that all our Boats went over safe tho' many of them were but about three Inches out of Water. At ☉ rise a g^{t} fog came up. The Enemy did not discover that we had evacuated our Lines, till we were all over.—

Governors Isld was evacuated at the same time. We left behind upon both Islds about half a dozen large Guns. Three or 4 men are missing who came off in a Batteau. This evacu^{a} is a masterpiece, vasty sup^{r} to Howes Conduct when he evacuated Boston. One or other Brother (it may be both) has candor eno' to own that it will make a figure in History. The *Killed, wounded & missg* fr. the Returns made last Tuesday sen' night *fall short of five hundred.* Most of the missing are prisoners. We have heard of some getting to the E. End of L. Isld & fr thence crossing the sound, so that the number will be reduced to little more than 400. The Enemys Loss is s^{d} to be from a Thous^{d} to two Thous^{d}. [Have been told that *their killed* amount to more *than five hundred*, which is not to be wondered at considg that all ours are Marksmen; & if so their killed & wounded must be far towds 2000.] On fridy or Sat^{y} (the first my Informer thinks) a N^{o}. of Ships came up to the place, w^{e} it was tho't they meant to occupy in order to cut off the comunication. May we not say in the Lang^{e} of the Sacred Writers, *our soul is escaped as a Bird out of snare* &c. We are bound to, & I trust shall always honor the Instruments; but as it is the Inspir^{a} of the M. High that giveth Understg, let Gd have the chief Glory. *Our People were about Twelve Thous^{d}* when they left the Islands; the Enemy was thought *about Eighteen*" End of the Letter

In the beginn^{g} of it — "The chief & best of my Inform^{a} I rec^{d} yest^{y} morn^{g} fr. a Brother by Profession who was upon the Isld most of the Sumer, Knows all the Ground in the Neighbourhood of the Fortifications, *was on Horse-*

back within our Lines, with a Glass & his naked Eye saw most of the proceedings, & heard hundreds of the Enemys shot fly over his head. What is *not fr. him* & that he could not confirm, tho' he did not deny, I shall *enclose in crotchets.*" Nov. 27 . . Cap^{t} Dennis a Captive from Halifax, which he left about End of Oct.^{r} says, the Officers on board considered their Loss at attack^{s} our Lines on L. Island in Aug^{t} last by Geñ Howes Returns at 330 Killed of the Kings Troops, and wounded uncertain: that an Eng^{r} or Scotch but British Baronet who came over as a Traveller & was a Spectator of the Action, declared in Halifax, the Kings loss was much greater than G. Howes returns, so as to excite some stir there. . . .

[Manuscript Diary of Rev. Ezra Stiles, D. D., in possession of Yale College.]

[No. 47.]

Narrative of Maj. Abraham Leggett.

. . . I agreed to Go on to Pokipsey and do work on the Two Frigates that was to be Built there by order ofthe Continal Congress then sitting In Philadelphia on the first of Febru'ry, 1776, several that was Engaged and walk'd to Pokipsey 83 miles — there I was engadg'd Till the first July. I then with several others Formed ourselves in a company under the command of Barnardus Swartout all Vollenteers — the Times began to appear Very Interesting — the British Fleet and large army was at Statten Island — we march'd off in High Spirrits Till we Got to the Calderbarrack near the Croton River — there we Staid but three Days for Derection — we then had news that English army was Preparing to land on Long Island — that they Easy effected under The Protection of Shiping — our army was

at this Time on Brooklin Hights[1] fortifying as fast as they could — the Enemy advanced upon Part of our army under the com'd of Lord Sterling and General Sullivan — they Faught on the Retreat to flat Bush Hills. There the battle became Very Hot but the Enemy was too Powerful — they extended there write wing so as to Cut off the Retreat of our detachment from the main army which they succeeded in and they Kill'd and Captured many, amongst them was several officers and Two Gen'ls — many was drownded in the mill Pond. This took Place 28th august 1776 — the next day the 29, Capt. Swartout crowsed with us to the Island and we was Placed on the Left from the Hill call'd Fort Green to Wallabout — the Two armies close in View of Each other, and for three Days the Rain fell in Torrents so that we could not Cook — then was the first Time I was Brought to Eat Raw Pork — the last night we was on the Island myself and Several of Volunteers was Put on advanced Centres with speshel orders How to behave Should we discover the Enemy advancing — the night was Foggy & Very Dark. Some circumstance made all the Centres Return on the lines but myself — my Remaining at my Station was Imputed to Bravery. Early in the morning yet Very Dark we was Paraded under the Report that we was to attack the Enemy in there lines we was Led around we new not where till I saw the old Stone Church of Brooklin — then an officer Riding by Says, a Groce mistake — we was orded to wheel about and Reman the lines, wich we did — a dangerous attempt — There we Remaned Till Some Time after — we then formed the Rear Gard we was orderd forward, still expected to meet the enemy Till we found ourselves at the Ferry and the army all cross'd But the Gard then under the Command of Gen'l Mifflin — we then was order'd to Choak up the Street with waggons

[1] A battery of eight guns was constructed here.

and carts to Prevent the Light Horse from Rushing Down upon us — at this time no boats — I Prepar'd myself to Swim the River flood tide But Fortunately Two Battoes Struck the Shore — by this Time there was but a few of us left — we all Hurred on Board and Shoved off — the Enemy Rush'd Down on the Hill and Commenced a Brisk fire. Fortunately no one was Hurt in our Boat — the other Boat had four wounded — we Remaned in the Town Two days then our Capt. march'd us up the Island to near King's Bridge — after our army had all Cross'd the Enemy was Preparing for Further operations. Two Frigates came threw the Buttermilk Channel and came to anchor off Turkel & Kips Bay to cover the landing of there army from Long Island — at this Time our Troops was Retreating up York Island — the Enemy advancing till Harlem Hills — there our Troops Gave Battle — the Battle was Severe for a Time. . . .

[Printed from the original manuscript with Introduction and Notes by Charles I. Bushnell.]

[No. 48.]

Statement of Hezekiah Munsell.

In the month of July . . . we were ordered over to Long Island, where we were quartered more than a month, during which the troops suffered much from sickness . . . . . Our company was divided, so that one half would go from the barracks at Brooklyn, to Flatbush to keep garrison one day, and the next day the other half would come to relieve them. We were daily expecting that we should be annoyed by the enemy. Some one of our company went every day to get milk for the sick sol-

diers at an old Dutchman's. About the time the enemy began to land on the island, I went on the errand myself, when the old Dutchman remarked that there would be "tousands and tousands of 'em."

On the morning of the battle on Long Island, the soldiers were busily employed in throwing up a breast-work, and in cutting and drawing into a line before the breast-work, a row of apple trees, the brush turned from us. I worked on the breastwork, and drawing in the trees. Col. Hart had command of our regiment at the time, Col. Gay being sick in New York, where he died.

We were now all prepared for an engagement with the enemy. It has been said by some that General Washington never left his saddle during the day; but I saw him walk along the lines and give his orders in person to the colonels of each regiment. I heard him give orders to Col. Hart, which were much like the following: "If the enemy come to attack us, let them approach within twenty yards before you fire." It was thought to be a stratagem of the enemy to draw our fire, and then force us from the entrenchment; but Washington was too old for them. I also heard Washington say: "If I see any man turn his back to-day I will shoot him through; I have two pistols loaded; but I will not ask any man to go further than I do; I will fight so long as I have a leg or an arm." This is but a scrap of what the brave Washington said on that occasion. He said the time had come when Americans must be freemen or slaves: quit yourselves like men, like soldiers; for all that is worth living for is at stake.

During the day of the Long Island battle, on the right wing where I was stationed, there was but little firing. The position which we held at the time was near a tide-mill — the yellow mill. While Washington was giving his orders to our colonel, there was in the pond, where this mill stood, a man who was attempting to escape from the

enemy, an inhabitant of the island probably, who was stuck in the mud. Some proposed to go and help him. Washington said no, knowing that they would be in the same predicament, and thus liable to be taken by the enemy. What became of the poor fellow I never knew.

I did not see the British on the day of this battle; the ground was such, and a grove intervening, as to cut off the prospect. I was not personally knowing to anything more relating to the battle, of any interest, but what is generally known. On the night we retreated I was just relieved from the breast-work, when I heard an officer remark that we were going to retreat. The next person I heard speak of it was Gen. Putnam, when we were on the march. He then spoke, I thought imprudently, for some one might have carried his report to the enemy. We left the island for New York between eight and nine o'clock in the evening. The retreat was conducted without any difficulty. When the morning came I went to the grand battery, and looking over to the [Long] island, saw two of our men plunge into the water, and swim to get away from the British. The enemy fired at them, but they swam till our boats picked them up. I don't know as any of our men were lost on the island by being left.

[*Stiles, Ancient Windsor,* page 714.]

[No. 49.]

Recollections of the Revolution on Long Island.

"Having been myself much gratified by perusing detached narratives of important events which occurred during our revolutionary struggle, and which the historian passes over in gross, I am induced to submit the following,

thinking it may interest some of your readers, coming as it does from an eye witness of the scenes.

"No period in our struggle, probably, was more critical than the year 1776, and no part of that year more so, than when our army was posted on Long Island in the month of August. I was there, at the age of twenty-three, had been attached to the Army from a few days after the battle of Lexington, and was present during the whole time of our occupying the post on the Island. Gen. Washington was himself there with the flower of the army. Gen. Howe was at the head of the British troops, and it is well known that the enemy had never concentrated a more numerous and better appointed army than was brought together at that time and place.

"It was on the 22[d] day of August that the enemy landed a large body of troops on the south west point of the Island and moved to the village of Flatbush, five or six miles from Brooklyn Ferry. A detachment of our army, consisting of 2400, was sent to meet them. This body was posted so as to occupy the only three passes through the hills between Flatbush and Brooklyn, where the enemy would probably attempt to force their way. They occupied the plain southward, and their advanced guards were so near ours that they reached us with their German rifles. They also annoyed us with grape shot from their field pieces. The soldier knows that when the smoke from the muzzle and vent of a gun, are seen in the same line with himself, the piece is aimed at him. In such circumstances at this time, I remember that I stepped behind a tree to avoid the shot discharged from one of their pieces. When the grape had passed I perceived that one of them had struck the tree behind which I stood. These being the only passes by which the enemy could approach directly, and as our force, so posted, was viewed sufficient to defend them, both bodies remained in that position, till the night

of the 26th. I well remember that all the former part of the night their front guards appeared very active,[1] frequently passing and repassing between us and their fires, doubtless to attract our attention and serve as a cover for their main object; for at dark they pushed a large body from their right, and by a forced march all night by the Bedford road, came in the rear of our troops just at day break,[2] and the first we knew of it was by their firing on our out guards. Just before this attack, their troops which remained at the first post [in the village of Flatbush] commenced an attack on our front, which had completely drawn our attention. They were soon repulsed, but when it was perceived that our flank had been turned, a retreat was ordered; and here commenced a scene most disastrous to us. Those from the three posts retreating separately, were met by the enemy in solid body, and thus were driven back alternately on either body of the enemy's forces. During the night another strong body of the enemy had landed, which moved and joined the first assailants. Our troops were now hemmed in, except 700 or 800 (of which the writer was one) who made their way, through our to main body. The remainder, composed principally of Huntington's and Smallwood's regiment, with a number of the flying troops, making about 1000, rallied and were formed on advantageous ground under the command of Brigadier Gen. Lord Stirling as officer of the day, and sustained the attack of the enemy with the utmost firmness, repulsing them and making a number of prisoners. But the enemy's main body coming up to the combat, and our troops seeing it in vain to make further resistance, surrendered. We being

[1] As the only part of the American lines from which the enemy could be seen was at Valley Grove, it was near this place that the writer was stationed.

[2] The writer errs in supposing that the enemy's flanking movement and his assault were simultaneous. The latter did not take place until nine o'clock.

called rebels, the most barbarous treatment was inflicted by the enemy. Capt Jewett, of Huntington's regiment, an officer much respected and beloved, of elegant and commanding appearance and of unquestionable bravery, was murdered in cold blood. Having surrendered his sword when demanded, the officer on receiving it instantly plunged it through his body. Our wounded were mostly put to death by the bayonet. An [American] Soldier near me fired on one of those murderers and brought him down; leaving his own black gun, he seized the brighter one of him who fell, the bayonet of which I perceived was bloody more than half its length.

"No one unused to such scenes can form any just idea of the confusion and vicissitudes of that day. In the flight of those who broke through, numbers plunged themselves into a mill-pond which intercepted them, rather than fall into the hands of the enemy. These were either drowned or shot. The loss on our side was supposed to exceed 1,000, including the slain and captured. As there was no account of the wounded, they were probably all dispatched who fell into the enemy's hands. Those of the advanced body who escaped joined their regiment, and the main body formed on a swell of ground at Brooklyn, facing the enemy, and behind a small body of earth hastily thrown up and rails placed on end, as at Bunkers Hill. Between nine and ten in the morning, the enemy's main body appeared. The front column advanced within about 20 or 30 rods of the centre of our line, their flanks firing on our right. Gen. Washington rode slowly past the whole of our rear, encouraging the troops. When passing the place where I was posted, he said in an animating one, (I recollect distinctly his words), 'Remember what you are contending for.' The enemy, instead of commencing the attack, as was momentarily expected, moved by the right behind a swell of ground and were soon out

sight. This unexpected movement of the enemy, owing to the extreme caution of Gen. Howe, who remembered Bunker Hill, gave to our army the opportunity of effecting the memorable retreat of the 29th.

"The state of our army on the day and until the night of the 29th when the retreat from the Island took place, is justly detailed by the historian; but I have never read any history of the day of the 29th, where the incidents which took place are detailed with accuracy."

[From the *Vermont Chronicle* of January 14th, 1832.]

[No. 50.]

Extract from the Narrative of James Sullivan Martin, [pp. 18–23.]

I remained in New-York two or three months, in which time several things occurred, but so trifling that I shall not mention them; when, sometime in the latter part of August, I was ordered upon a fatigue party; we had scarcely reached the grand parade, when I saw our sergeant-major directing his course up Broadway, toward us, in rather an unusual step for him; he soon arrived and informed us, and then the commanding officer of the party, that he had orders to take off all belonging to our regiment and march us to our quarters, as the regiment was ordered to Long-Island, the British having landed in force there. Although this was not unexpected to me, yet it gave me rather a disagreeable feeling, as I was pretty well assured I should have to snuff a little gunpowder. However I kept my cogitations to myself, went to my quarters, packed up my clothes, and got myself in readiness for the expedition as soon as possible. I then went to the top of the house where I had a full view of that part of the

Island; I distinctly saw the smoke of the field-artillery, but the distance and the unfavorableness of the wind prevented my hearing their report, at least but faintly. The horrors of battle there presented themselves to my mind in all their hideousness; I must come to it now, thought I,— well, I will endeavor to do my duty as well as I am able and leave the event with Providence. We were soon ordered to our regimental parade, from which, as soon as the regiment was formed, we were marched off for the ferry. At the lower end of the street were placed several casks of sea-bread, made, I believe, of canel and peas-meal, nearly hard enough for musket flints; the casks were unheaded and each man was allowed to take as many as he could, as he marched by. As my good luck would have it, there was a momentary halt made; I improved the opportunity thus offered me, as every good soldier should upon all important occasions, to get as many of the biscuit as I possibly could; no one said any thing to me, and I filled my bosom, and took as many as I could hold in my hand, a dozen or more in all, and when we arrived at the ferry-stairs I stowed them away in my knapsack. We quickly embarked on board of the boats; as each boat started, three cheers were given by those on board, which was returned by the numerous spectators who thronged the wharves; they all wished us good luck, apparently; although it was with most of them, perhaps, nothing more than ceremony. We soon landed at Brooklyn, upon the Island, marched up the ascent from the ferry to the plain. We now began to meet the wounded men, another sight I was unacquainted with, some with broken legs, and some with broken heads. The sight of these a little daunted me, and made me think of home, but the sight and thought vanished together. We marched a short distance, when we halted to refresh ourselves. Whether we had any other victuals besides the hard bread

I do not remember, but I remember my gnawing at them; they were hard enough to break the teeth of a rat. One of the soldiers complaining of thirst to his officer; look at that man, said he, pointing to me, he is not thirsty, I will warrant it. I felt a little elevated to be stiled a man. While resting here, which was not more than twenty minutes or half an hour, the Americans and British were warmly engaged within sight of us. What were the feelings of most or all the young soldiers at this time, I know not, but I know what were mine;—but let mine or theirs be what they might, I saw a Lieutenant who appeared to have feelings not very enviable; whether he was actuated by fear or the canteen I cannot determine now; I thought it fear at the time; for he ran round among the men of his company, snivelling and blubbering, praying each one if he had aught against him, or if *he* had injured any one that they would forgive him, declaring at the same time that he, from his heart, forgave them if they had offended him, and I gave him full credit for his assertion; for had he been at the gallows with a halter about his neck, he could not have shown more fear or penitence. A fine soldier you are, I thought, a fine officer, an exemplary man for young soldiers! I would have then suffered anything short of death rather than have made such an exhibition of myself; but, as the poet says,

> "Fear does things so like a witch
> "Tis hard to distinguish which is which."

The officers of the new levies wore cockades of different colours to distinguish them from the standing forces, as they were called; the field officers wore red, the captains white, and the subaltern officers green. While we were resting here our Lieutenant-Colonel and Major, (our Colonel not being with us,) took their cockades from their hats; being asked the reason, the Lieutenant-Colonel

replied that he was willing to risk his life in the cause of his country, but was unwilling to stand a particular mark for the enemy to fire at. He was a fine officer and a brave soldier.

We were soon called upon to fall in and proceed. We had not gone far, about half a mile, when I heard one in the rear ask another where his musket was; I looked around and saw one of the soldiers stemming off without his gun, having left it where we last halted; he was inspecting his side as if undetermined whether he had it or not, he then fell out of the ranks to go in search of it; one of the company, who had brought it on (wishing to see how far he would go before he missed it) gave it to him. The reader will naturally enough conclude that he was a brave soldier. Well he was a brave fellow for all this accident, and received two severe wounds, by musket balls, while fearlessly fighting for his country at the battle of White Plains. So true is the proverb, "A singed cat may make a good mouser." Stranger things may happen.

We overtook a small party of the artillery here dragging a heavy twelve pounder upon a field carriage, sinking half way to the naves in the sandy soil. They plead hard for some of us to assist them to get in their piece; our officers, however, paid no attention to their entreaties, but pressed forward towards a creek, where a large party of Americans and British were engaged. By the time we arrived, the enemy had driven our men into the creek, or rather mill-pond, (the tide being up,) where such as could swim, got across; those that could not swim and could not procure anything to buoy them up sunk. The British having several fieldpieces stationed by a brick house, were pouring the cannister and grape upon the Americans like a shower of hail; they would doubtless have done them much more damage than they did, but for the twelve pounder mentioned above; the men having

gotten it within sufficient distance to reach them, and opening a fire upon them, some obliged them to shift their quarters. There was in this action a regiment of Maryland troops, (volunteers,) all young gentlemen. When they came out of the water and mud to us, looking like water rats, it was a truly pitiful sight. Many of them were killed in the pond, and more were drowned. Some of us went into the water after the fall of the tide, and took out a number of corpses and a great many arms that were sunk in the pond and creek.

Our regiment lay on the ground we then occupied the following night; the next day in the afternoon, we had a considerable tight scratch with about an equal number of the British, which began rather unexpectedly, and a little whimsically. A few of our men, (I mean of our regiment,) went over the creek upon business that usually employed us, that is, in search of something to eat. There was a field of indian corn at a short distance from the creek, with several cocks of hay about half way from the creek to the cornfield; the men purposed to get some of the corn, or anything else that was eatable. When they got up with the hay-cocks they were fired upon by about an equal number of the British, from the cornfield; our people took to the hay, and the others to the fence, where they exchanged a number of shots at each other, neither side inclining to give back. A number, say forty or fifty more of our men, went over and drove the British from the fence; they were by this time reinforced in their turn, and drove us back. The two parties kept thus alternately reinforcing until we had most of our regiment in the action. After the officers came to command, the English were soon routed from the place, but we dare not follow them for fear of falling into some snare, as the whole British army was in the vicinity of us; I do not recollect that we had any one killed outright, but we had several severely wounded, and some, I believe, mortally.

Our regiment was alone, no other troops being near where we were lying; we were upon a rising ground, covered with a young growth of trees; we felled a fence of trees around us to prevent the approach of the enemies' horse. We lay there a day longer, in the latter part of the afternoon there fell a very heavy shower of rain which wet us all to the skin, and much damaged our amunition; about sunset, when the shower had passed over, we were ordered to parade and discharge our pieces, we attempted to fire by platoons for improvement, but we made blundering work of it; it was more like a running fire, than firing by divisions: however, we got our muskets as empty as our stomachs, and with half the trouble, nor was it half the trouble to have reloaded them, for we had wherewithal to do that, but not so with our stomachs.

Just at dusk, I, with one or two others of our company, went off to a barn, about half a mile distant, with intent to get some straw to lodge upon, the ground and leaves being drenched in water, and we as wet as they; it was quite dark in the barn, and while I was fumbling about the floor some one called to me from the top of the mow, inquiring where I was from; I told him. He asked me if we had not had an engagement there, (having heard us discharging our guns,) I told him we had and a severe one too;—he asked if many were killed;—I told him that I saw none killed, nor any very badly wounded. I then heard several others, as it appeared, speaking on the mow. Poor fellows, they had better have been at their posts, than skulking in a barn on account of a little wet, for I have not the least doubt but that the British had possession of their mortal parts before the noon of the next day.

I could not find any straw, but I found some wheat in the sheaf, standing by the side of the floor; I took a sheaf or two and returned as fast as I could to the regiment. When I arrived the men were all paraded to march off the

ground; I left my wheat, seized my musket and fell into the ranks. We were strictly enjoined not to speak, or even cough, while on the march. All orders were given from officer to officer, and communicated to the men in whispers. What such secrecy could mean we could not divine. We marched off in the same way that we had come on to the island, forming various conjectures among ourselves as to our destination. Some were of opinion that we were to endeavour to get on the flank, or in the rear of the enemy. Others, that we were going up the East river, to attack them in that quarter; but none, it seems, knew the right of the matter. We marched on, however, until we arrived at the ferry, where we immediately embarked on board the batteaux, and were conveyed safely to New-York, where we were landed about three o'clock in the morning, nothing against our inclination.

The next day the British showed themselves to be in possession of our works upon the island, by firing upon some of our boats, passing to and from Governor's Island. Our regiment was employed, during this day, in throwing up a sort of breastwork, at their alarm post upon the wharves, (facing the enemy,) composed of spars and logs, and filling the space between with the materials of which the wharves were composed,—old broken junk bottles, flint stones, &c., which, had a cannon ball passed through, would have chanced to kill five men where the ball would one. But the enemy did not see fit to molest us.

[*A Narrative of some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier; interspersed with Anecdotes of Incidents that occurred within his own observation.* Written by himself.

"Long, sleepless nights in heavy arms I've stood;
"And spent laborious days in dust and blood."
Pope's Homer.

Hallowell, 1830, pp. iv, 219.]

[No. 51.]

Narrative of the Participation of the Rhode Island Regiment in the Campaign on Long Island, by Captain Stephen Olney.

"After a tedious march overland to New-York, the Rhode Island regiment was stationed on Long Island, at Brooklyn heights, half a mile from the city, just across the river. Here they were steadily employed in erecting fortifications on the island, destined to be of no service. The island was often annoyed by small parties of British, scouting about and robbing the luckless inhabitants of whatever they could lay hands upon. Captain Olney was one of a party despatched one night to look after some of these fellows, and had the good fortune to apprehend some seven or eight of them. A part of them got intelligence and made off quick enough to save themselves. Captain Olney's prisoners proved to be persons of 'mature age, good sense, and very considerable information,' and he expressed his amazement 'that such persons should doubt the justice of the patriot cause, and still more astonishing that they avowed their belief that the states had not the means of supporting their independence.' In after life, he says it appeared no wonder they should have doubted the latter, so perfectly unprepared were the undisciplined forces of the states. . ... [Soon after their arrival on Long Island the army was called out to hear the Declaration of Independence read.] * * *

"So elated were the little band on Long-Island, that they lay down with light hearts that night, and Captain Olney records that he dreamed, after coming off guard, that night, and falling asleep in his marquee, that a British vessel came into the harbor of New York, and struck her sails in honor of General Washington. He awoke, he says, and 'considered it was but a dream, but beheld in

about two hours a British frigate, the first that had ever made the attempt, set sail, and ran by New York, up to Tarytown Cove, notwithstanding the fire from all our batteries and received but little damage,' to the great mortification of the company who found themselves much deceived about the strength of their batteries. But this was nothing to what followed.

"Never perhaps during the whole war of the revolution, was there an American force on any station, that ought to have watched with greater vigilance the movements of the enemy than that now encamped on Long Island; unfortunately General Greene, who had been put in command there was taken sick, and had to return home, so that the command devolved upon General Sullivan, or rather he was succeeded by him. General Sullivan was a man of undoubted honor and trust, and his character was beyond the reach of suspicion, but it must be evident to every one who reads that there was a terrible mismanagement somewhere. An army said to be 23,000 strong, was lying just without Sandy Hook, and waiting only for an unguarded moment to land their forces. The frigate that Captain Olney mentions, which run by the guns of so many forts, ought to have been a sufficient warning if they had no other. A small detachment was stationed on Governor's Island, and another at Paulus Hook, in front of New York, and upon the right bank of the Hudson. The American troops (the main body of the army) were in the city commanded by General Washington in person, General Putnam was on Long Island, his headquarters on Brooklyn Heights, and Brigadier General Stirling, Lord Stirling as he was generally called, and many other officers of inferior rank, who afterwards distinguished themselves highly in the war of independence, were there. * * * * But it is useless to look back or mourn over the 3,000 Americans who fell or were taken prisoners, in that

disastrous night and day, when the British surprised the forces at Brooklyn. It is useless, as it was then, to stop to mourn over the flower of Maryland, the entire regiment of whom consisting of brave and educated young men, of some of the most patriotic and best families in the province, which were totally cut to pieces *from the mistakes of a night.*

"In silence and security the British made their dispositions of attack, and soon after dark, succeeded in effecting a landing between the villages of Gravesend and New Utrecht, unseen and unopposed. This place is directly on the west coast of Long Island, and opposite Staten Island, and near the narrows, and was only three miles from the American encampment. General Sullivan had been in New York on the preceding day, but had returned on that evening, Captain Olney states, bringing over 3,000 men; and this 3,000 by his account took their station somewhat in advance of the fort. * * * * *

"Stephen Olney, who was sent on with a detachment in advance, lay all night within a mile of this force of 23,000 men, and knew not that they were in the neighborhood. * * *

"[Olney] was with the regiment that was ordered on picquet guard, and lay that night preceding the battle, on their arms, in a wood within one mile of the enemy. 'The ground being covered with wood, we were not exactly apprized of our situation,' says he. Between him and the forts, on the right and left, the ground was occupied by Lord Stirling. It was not until daylight that this division was attacked, and the first they knew, firing commenced simultaneously in their front and rear. The firing at first was from left to right. 'We perceived,' he says 'we were surrounded, but as yet saw no enemy; Lieutenant Colonel Cornell (I believe Colonel Hitchcock was not present) ordered Capt. Tew's platoon, to which I belonged, to move in front, to protect our

sentries, and marched the regiment towards our forts where the firing continued. When they came in sight of the enemy, they were necessitated to fight or run their way through.' The latter it seems was decided on, and these brave fellows, with some killed and others wounded, gallantly forced their way through and gained the fort of Gen. Putnam. 'Many who hid in the woods came into camp after night,' but to return to Capt. Tew's platoon: 'he marched a little distance in front, but as the firing continued in our rear, he thought proper to detach me, with about 20 men, in front, to protect the sentries, and he marched after, and shared the fate of his regiment, the fate of those who fell on the sword of the enemy. I marched forward, and found the enemy firing their field pieces, and some small arms into the woods, where our sentries were placed, but the balls seemed to make the most havoc in the tops of the trees. I placed my men behind the trees, to be in readiness, if the enemy advanced, believing we were too far off for small arms, but my men thought they could kill, and kept up a deliberate fire.

"'We had been thus situated about half an hour, when the firing ceased in the rear, and I discovered a party of the enemy coming towards us in that direction; I formed my men, and marched off in very quick time towards our home, (fort,) believing the enemy were between us and the forts. I cautioned my men not to hurry, as the greatest exertion would be necessary at the end of the race; in about two miles, we came out of the woods into a field beside the road which led by a school house, by which we must pass to get over the mill-dam to our fort; at this place Lieutenant Thomas Hughes joined me with a small party; on getting over the fence into the road, I saw the enemy as near the school house as we were, drew up in a line ever so long, deliberately viewing our works; I told my Sergeant Pollin to fix his bayonet, as we must go

through here, or die. At this instant, the enemy saw us, and ran ahead, and fired, and more ran before them and fired to prevent our passage. Nevertheless, I made out to get nearly all my men past the school house, and part of Hughes's; after passing the enemy, about one hundred yards, they had huddled together in the road. I ordered my men to face about, and give them one well-directed fire, which I saw from the staggering, had taken good effect.' They then continued this running fight to Flatbush, and finally got into the fort in safety. 'I remark,' Captain Olney continues, 'about 2,400 were taken prisoners, and 500 killed and wounded,' making it one hundred less then the official account of the battle states.

"'At the time, I did not,' he says, 'pretend to know or examine the generalship of posting Sullivan's and Sterling's forces, as they were, leaving the forts but poorly manned with sick and invalids. It must be on the supposition that the enemy would come on the direct road, and if our troops were overpowered, they might retreat to and defend the fort. But the enemy took a circuitous route, and where it was said Colonel —— (Hitchcock probably) had neglected to guard, and arrived in our rear without notice. Had it been left to the British Generals to make a disposition of our troops, it is a chance if they would have made it more advantageous to themselves, and but from their tardiness they might have taken our main fort. All that seemed to prevent it was a scarecrow row of palisades from the fort to low water in the cove, which Major Box had ordered set up that morning. After we got into our fort, hungry, tired and sleepy, to augment our distress, there came on a dreadful heavy storm, with thunder and lightning, and the rain fell in such torrents that the water was soon ancle deep in the fort. Yet with all these inconveniences, and a powerful enemy just without musket shot, our men could not be kept awake. They

would sit down and fall asleep, although Lieut. Cornell, a faithful and vigilant officer, whom they used to nickname 'Old Snarl,' was threatening to make daylight shine through them all the time.'

"Thus ended the melancholy tragedy of the battle of Long Island; through all its beautiful valleys from Bedford to Jamaica, the turf was strewed with the dead and the dying; imagination paints the scene, redolent of horrors.

* * * *

"We had to take our baggage, camp equipage, &c., on our shoulders,' says Captain Olney, 'and carry them to the boats,' and tedious indeed was the operation, through mud and mire, and not a ray of light visible, for this indulgence would at once have betrayed them, and through a fog so intense, you might almost grasp it. The Captain and his company were soon, however, in more comfortable quarters, and where they could venture to breathe freely, though not eating the bread of idleness: a great operation was yet to be performed; that was to remove the forces on Governor's Island, and get them to the same place of safety. Two regiments occupied that Island, and with abundance of munitions of war, and a numerous artillery. The Americans had fortified it to defend the east river, but it could not be expected to be of any avail after the loss of Long-Island; the object was effected, and the whole safely removed to New York."

[*Life of Olney, by Mrs. Williams.*]

[No. 52.]

Extract of a Letter from a Marylander, dated,

New York, August 30, 1776.

I have just time to give you a short account of our late engagement at *Long-Island.* On *Tuesday* we received intelligence that the enemy had landed their troops about five miles below our lines; in consequence of which, General *Stirling* was ordered to march to the right and General *Parsons* to the left, with the Brigades under their commands, to take possession of some rising ground, in order to flank the enemy and retard the march until a sufficient reinforcement should be sent from this place to man the lines.

We began our march to the right, at three o'clock in the morning, with about thirteen hundred men, and about sunrise, on our near approach to the ground, discovered the enemy making up to it, and in a few minutes our advanced parties began the attack; we immediately advanced, and took possession of the ground and formed the line of battle, when our parties retreated to the main body and formed in line with us. In the meantime they began a warm fire with their Artillery and Light Infantry, from their left, while the main body was forming in columns to attack us in front. Our men behaved well, and maintained their ground, until ten o'clock, when the enemy retreated about two hundred yards and halted, and the firing on each side ceased, at which time we heard *Generals* Sullivan and Parsons engaged on our left. About eleven an express came to his Lordship, on which one battalion of Riflemen was immediately dispatched to their assistance, which left us with no more than nine hundred and fifty men. We soon heard the fire continue round on our left,

and in a short time discovered part of the enemy in our rear, going on to our lines, in order to cut off the communication between us. Being thus surrounded, and no probability of reinforcement, his Lordship ordered me to retreat with the remaining part of our men, and force our way through to our camp. We soon fell in with a party of the enemy, who clubbed their fire locks, and waved their hats to us, as if they they meant to surrender as prisoners; but on our advancing within sixty yards, they presented their pieces and fired, which we returned with so much warmth that they soon quitted their post and retired to a large body that was lying in ambuscade. During this interval, the main part of our force retreated from the left through a marsh, with twenty-three prisoners, and got in safe, with the loss of one man killed and three drowned in crossing the creek. We were then left with only five companies of our battalion, when the enemy returned, and after a warm and close engagement for near ten minutes, our little line became so disordered we were under the necessity of retreating to a piece of woods on our right, where we formed and made a second attack, but being overpowered with numbers, and surrounded on all sides, by at least twenty thousand men, we were drove with much precipitation and confusion. General *Stirling* on this retreat was missing, whose brave example had encouraged and animated our young soldiers with almost invincible resolution.

The impractibility of forcing through such a formidable body of troops, rendered it the height of rashness and imprudence to risk the lives of our remaining party in a third attempt, and it became necessary for us to endeavor to effect our escape in the best manner we possibly could. A party immediately retreated to the right through the woods, and Captain *Ford* and myself, with twenty others, to the left, through a marsh; nine only of whom got safe

in. The principal loss sustained in our battalion, fell on Captains *Veazey*, *Adams*, *Lucas*, *Ford*, and Bowie's companies. The killed, wounded, and missing amount to two hundred and fifty-nine; our whole loss that day supposed to be near one thousand, chief part of whom are prisoners, among whom are Generals *Sullivan* and *Stirling*. The above is as circumstantial an account as the hurry and want of time will admit of.

A list of the killed and missing in the *Maryland* Battalion: Captain *Veazey* killed; Lieutenant *Butler*, said to be killed; Ensign *Fernandes*, Lieutenant *Dent*, Captain *Bowie*, missing; Lieutenant *Sterret*, *Coursey*, and *Wright*, Ensign *Ridge*, thirteen Sergeants, and two hundred and thirty-five privates.

[*American Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, fol. 1232.]

[No. 53.]

Extract from a Letter from New-York, dated,

Friday Morning, August 30, 1776.

On *Monday* we were ordered here, and next morning were sent over to *Long-Island*, where our battalion occupied the lines opposite the left of the enemy; the works we had were very weak, and but few cannon to defend them. The General officers held a Council yesterday afternoon, and thought it necessary to abandon the Island, for fear of the men-of-war getting into the *East River*, and cutting off the communication with this place, which they would have done the first fair wind that served. Our battalion, with the other *Pennsylvania* troops and the *Maryland* Regiment, were ordered to cover the retreat of our

Army, which must have consisted of ten thousand men. Our Army began to embark in boats about ten o'clock, and continued till daylight. We received orders to quit our station about two o'clock this morning, and had made our retreat almost to the ferry, when General *Washington* ordered us back to that part of the lines we were first at, which was reckoned to be the most dangerous post. We got back undiscovered by the enemy, and continued there until daylight. Providentially for us, a great fog arose, which prevented the enemy from seeing our retreat from their works, which was not more than musket shot from us. Had we been discovered, we must have been unavoidably cut off, as we were on a neck of land which could have been taken possession of by them before we could have got out. We have got all our regiment over safe, except our sentinels, which we were obliged to leave; but gave them notice to retreat in time; therefore expect they will all get safe over. The first fair wind, it is expected the men-of-war will come up, and bombard the town, and from the heights on *Long-Island* it may easily be done. It is the general opinion we cannot be able to keep it; therefore expect we shall be obliged to retreat to *Mount Washington* and *King's* Bridge. Since I have been on *Long-Island*, I have had no sleep, nor anything to eat but what I plundered; therefore travelled very light when we were obliged to scamper off this morning. By a flag received yesterday from the enemy, we are informed Lord *Stirling* and General *Sullivan* were made prisoners.

[*American Archives*, vol. I, 5th series, folio 1233.]

[No. 54.]

Extract of a Letter, dated,

August 28, 1776.

We yesterday had a severe engagement with the enemy on *Long-Island;* they came through a wood where we were posted, in order to come to our lines; they did make an attempt to force them, but were repulsed; they gained a little ground, but at as great a price almost as they did *Bunker's Hill.* We have missing on our part General *Sullivan*, and about three hundred others. The Island is so extensive, and the enemy having got round our people, that many of our men made their way through into the country, and are constantly coming in; General *Parsons* was missing in the same way, but came in this morning.

From our people who have come in, we learn the enemy have lost great numbers; a deserter informs near six hundred.

[*Force, Archives,* vol. 1, 5th Series, fol. 1194.]

[No. 55.]

Extract of a Letter from New York, dated,

August 28, 1776.

Yesterday morning the enemy stole through the woods I mentioned to you in my last our men were posted in; it is so extensive we could not sufficiently guard it. They have gained a little ground, but have bought it almost as

dear as they did *Bunker's Hill.* Our Army, at least the small part that was engaged, behaved most manfully; they, as it were, surrounded our people, and we were obliged to fight our way through them. Colonel *Smallwood's* battalion has gained immortal honour. He was not with it himself; Lord *Stirling* commanded it, and the *Delaware* battalion, as part of his brigade. They fought the enemy, treble in number, in open field, several hours, 'till at last, surrounded on the side of a small creek, they were obliged to make the best retreat they could. Most of them swam the creek. Lord *Stirling*, at the head of three companies, attempted to force his way through the enemy. Captains *Bowie*, Veazey, Lieutenants *Sterret*, *Wright*, *Coursey*, *Dent*, *Butler*, *Praul*, Ensigns *Furnandes*, *Courts*, are missing, and about one hundred and fifty men of *Smallwood's* battalion. The officers gave Lord *Stirling* the character of as brave a man as ever lived. We are very sorry for his loss, and are fearful that he is killed, from the danger he was seen in. General *Sullivan* is likewise missing, and many other officers, with about three hundred men; however, we are still in hopes of seeing many of them, as they are constantly coming in, having got round through the country; General *Parsons* has come in in the same way, after being out all this morning. I assure you there has been severe work on both sides. Our people who have come in say the fields and woods are covered with dead bodies; and a deserter informs the enemy have lost near six hundred men. I have the pleasure to inform you among the slain is General *Grant*, lately Colonel *Grant*, of the House of Commons, who gave the *Americans* the character of Cowards. General *Parsons* saw his body; but the soldier who killed him and got his papers, &c., is missing. The enemy once attempted to force our lines, but were repulsed, and are now encamped about a mile from us.

Colonel *Smallwood* and Colonel *Ware* were necessarily detained here on a Court-Martial for the trial of Colonel *Zedtwitz*, who is sentenced to be broke, and rendered incapable of ever holding any military office.

[*Force, Archives,* vol. I, 5th Series, fol. 1194.]

[No. 55.]

Narrative of Incidents of the Battle by a Soldier.

N. York, Sept. 1, '76. Last Monday we went over to L. I., and about midnight were alarmed by some of our scouting parties, who advised us that the enemy were coming up the Island with several field-pieces. Upon which near 3,000 men were ordered out, chiefly of Marylanders and Pennsylvanians, to attack them on their march. About sunrise we came up with a large body of them. The Delaware and Maryland battalion made one part. Col. Atlee, with his battalion, a little before us, had taken post in an orchard, and behind a barn; and on the approach of the enemy, he gave them a very severe fire for a considerable time, till they were near surrounding him, when he retreated to the woods. The enemy then advanced to us, when Lord Stirling, who commanded, immediately drew up in a line, and offered them battle in the true English taste. The British then advanced within about 300 yards of us, and began a very heavy fire from their cannon and mortars: for both the balls and shells flew very fast, now and then taking off a head. Our men stood it amazingly well, not one even showed a disposition to shrink. Our orders were not to fire until the enemy came within 50 yards of us; but when they perceived we stood their fire so cooly and resolutely, they declined

coming any nearer, though treble our number. In this situation we stood from sunrise till 12 o'clock, the enemy firing on us the chief part of the time, when the main body of British, by a route we never dreamed of, had surrounded us, and driven within the lines, or scattered in the woods, all our men except the Delaware and Maryland battalions, who were standing at bay with double their number. Thus situated, we were ordered to attempt a retreat by fighting our way through the enemy, who had posted themselves and nearly filled every road and field between us and our lines. We had not retreated a quarter of a mile, before we were fired on by an advanced party of the enemy, and those in the rear playing their artillery on us. Our men fought with more than Roman valor. We forced the advanced party which first attacked us to give way, through which opening we got a passage down the side of a marsh, seldom before waded over, which we passed, and then swam a narrow river, all the while exposed to the enemy's fire. Capts. Ramsey's and Scott's companies were in front and sustained the first fire of the enemy, when hardly a man fell. The whole of the right wing of our battalion thinking it impossible to march through the marsh, attempted to force their way through the woods, where they, almost to a man, were killed or taken.

The Maryland battalion has lost 259 men, amongst whom are 12 officers: Caps. Veasy and Bowey, Lts. Butler, Sterrit, Dent, Coursey, Muse, Prawl; Ensigns Corts, Fernandes. Who killed and who prisoners is yet uncertain. Cols. Atlee, Miles and Piper, are also taken. 1,000 men missing in all. We took few prisoners. Many officers lost their swords and guns. Most of our Generals on a high hill,[1] in the lines, viewed us with their glasses, as we

[1] Ponkiesberg, at the junction of Court and Atlantic streets.

were retreating, and saw the enemy we had to pass through, though we could not. Many thought we would surrender in a body without firing. When we began the attack,[1] Gen. Washington wrung his hands and cried out "Good God! what brave fellows I must this day lose!" Major Guest commanded the Maryland battalion, (the Col. and Lt. Col. being both at York,) Capts. Adams and Lucas were sick. The Major, Capt. Ramsey, and Lt. Plunket were foremost and within 100 yards of the enemy's muzzles, when they were fired on by the enemy, who were chiefly under cover of an orchard, save a few that showed themselves and pretended to give up; clubbing their firelocks till we came within 40 yards, when they immediately presented and blazed in our faces; they entirely overshot us and killed some men away behind in the rear. I had the satisfaction of dropping one the first fire. I was so near I could not miss. I discharged my rifle seven times that day.

[*Onderdonk's Revolutionary Incidents, Suffolk Co.*, p. 147.]

[No. 57.]

Statement made by a Soldier engaged in the Battle with that part of the British Forces who were disguised. (Extract of a Letter from Long-Island, dated,)

August 28, 1776.

Yesterday's occurrences, no doubt will be described to you in various ways. I embrace this leisure moment to give as satisfactory an account as I am able. A large body of the enemy that landed some time since on *Long-Island*,

[1] Doubtless the attack to cut through the enemy's lines when retreating.

at the end of a beautiful plain, had extended their troops about six miles from the place of their first landing. There were at this time eleven regiments of our troops posted in different parts of the woods, between our lines and the enemy, through which they must pass if they attempted anything against us.

Early in the morning our scouting parties discovered a large body of the enemy, both horse and foot, advancing on the *Jamaica* road towards us. I was despatched to General *Putnam* to inform him of it. On my way back I discovered, as I thought, our battalion on a hill coming in, dressed in hunting-shirts, and was going on to join them, but was stopped by a number of our soldiers, who told me they were the enemy in our dress; on this I prevailed on a Sergeant and two men to halt and fire on them, which produced a shower of bullets, and we were obliged to retire.

In the mean time, the enemy, with a large body, penetrated through the woods on our right and centre, or front, and about nine o'clock landed another body on their right, the whole stretching across the fields and woods between our works and our troops, and sending out parties accompanied with Light-Horse, which harassed our surrounded and surprised new troops, who, however, sold their lives dear. Our forces then made towards our lines, but the enemy had taken possession of the ground before them by stolen marches. Our men broke through parties after parties, but still found the enemy's thousands before them. Colonel *Smallwood's*, *Atlee's*, and *Haslet's* battalions, with General *Stirling* at their head, had collected on an eminence and made a good stand, but the enemy fired a field-piece on them, and being greatly superior in number, obliged them to retreat into a marsh, and finding it out of their power to withstand about six thousand men, they waded through the mud and water to a mill opposite to

them. Their retreat was covered by the Second Battalion which had got into our lines. Colonel *Lutz's* and the *New-England* regiments after this made some resistance in the woods, but were obliged by superior numbers to retire.

Colonel *Miles's* and Colonel *Broadhead's* battalions, findthemselves surrounded, determined to fight and run; they did so, and broke through *English*, *Hessians*, &c., and dispersed Horse, and at last came in with considerable loss. Colonel *Parry* was early in the day shot through the head, encouraging his men. Eighty of our battalion came in this morning, having forced their way through the enemy's rear, and came round by way of *Hell-Gate*, and we expect more, who are missing, will come in the same way.

[*Force, Archives*, vol. 1, 5th Series, fol. 1195.]

[No. 58.]

Account of Washington's Presence in the Brooklyn Lines, Aug. 27. (*Extract of a Letter, dated,*)

Head-Quarters, Long-Island,
August 28, 1776.

Yesterday General *Washington* and his suite came over to this place upon receiving intelligence that Generals *Howe* and *Clinton* had landed with all the troops, except a few to guard *Staten-Island*. Immediately on our arrival we heard the noise of a very smart engagement with musketry and field pieces; it proved to be Lord *Stirling's* brigade, consisting of *Smallwood's* regiment from *Maryland*, the *Delaware* regiment commanded by Haslet, and *Pennsylvania* regiment commanded by Atlee, besides some

others, who behaved like heroes. They were surrounded by the enemy, who received constant and large reinforcements, whilst our brave men could not get the least assistance from their friends, as there were not men sufficient to fill our lines, and we expected an attack every minute. There were several other smart and pitched battles till evening, when Lord *Stirling's* men began to retreat. We have about five hundred and fifty missing at present. This morning General *Parsons* came in with a few men; he brings an account that the enemy have lost five hundred men, and a hat, with two bullet holes, marked Colonel *Grant*, and his watch. I wish it was General *Grant*, but their great officers don't like venturing. In the evening the enemy had a number of tents pitched about a mile distance. This morning about four o'clock I accompanied the General around the works, and we saw very large encampments; by these appearances, and information, the enemy are twenty thousand strong. Our sentries are very near theirs, who are about a quarter of a mile distance.

[*Force, Archives*, vol. I, 5th Series, fol. 1195.]

[No. 59.]

Letter from Gen. Washington to Governor Trumbull, giving an Account of the Battle and Retreat.

General Washington to Governour Trumbull.

New-York, September 6, 1776.

Sir: I have been honoured with your favour of the 31st ultimo, and am extremely obliged by the measures you are taking, in consequence of my reccommendation letter.

The exertions of *Connecticut* upon this, as well as upon every other occasion, do them great honour, and I hope will be attended with successful and happy consequences. In respect to the mode of conduct to be pursued by the troops that go over to the Island, I cannot lay down any certain rule; it must be formed and governed by circumstances, and the direction of those who command them.

I should have done myself the honour of transmitting to you an account of the engagement between a detachment of our troops and the enemy, on *Long-Island*, on the 27th, and of our retreat from thence, before now, had it not been for the multiplicity of business I have been involved in ever since; and being still engaged, I cannot enter upon a minute and particular detail of the affair. I shall only add, that we lost, in killed, wounded, and prisoners, from seven hundred to one thousand men. Among the prisoners are General *Sullivan* and Lord *Stirling*. The inclosed list will show you the names of many of the officers that are prisoners. The action was chiefly with the troops from *Jersey*, *Pennsylvania*, the Lower Counties, and *Maryland*, and Colonel *Huntington's* regiment; they suffered greatly, being attacked and overpowered by numbers of the enemy greatly superiour to them. The enemy's loss we have not been able to ascertain, but we have reason to believe it was considerable. The engagement was warm, and conducted with great resolution and bravery on the part of our troops. During the engagement, a deep column of the enemy descended from the woods, and attempted an impression upon our lines, but retreated immediately on the discharge of a cannon, and part of the musketry from the line nearest to them. As the main body of the enemy had encamped not far from our lines, and as I had reason to believe they intended to force us from them by regular approaches, which the nature of the ground favoured extremely, and at the same time meant,

by the ships of war, to cut off the communication between the City and Island, and by that means kéep our men divided, and unable to oppose them anywhere, by the advice of the General Officers, on the night of the 29th, I withdrew our troops from thence without any loss of men and but little baggage.

I am, &c.,

Go. Washington.

[*Force, Archives,* vol. II, 5th Series, fol. 196.]

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Relating to the Progress of Revolutionary Measures on Long Island.

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1. Letter from Lord Stirling to Col. Ward, relating to the Capture of Frank James.
2. Gov. Tryon's letter to Lord George Germaine, guaranteeing the Loyalty of the Inhabitants of Long Island.
3. Letters from Gen. Greene and Benjamin Sands, giving some account of the loyalist recruits, and furnishing evidence against nineteen residents of Queens Co.
4. Washington's Instructions to Gen. Putnam regarding the Loyalists on Long Island.
5. Benjamin Birdsall's Complaint to the Provincial Congress of its neglect of him.
6. Letter of William Smith, of Suffolk county, giving Information against the Tories in his neighborhood.
7. Examination of John Hendrickson, regarding the Conspiracy of the Tories.

7a. Sergeant Graham's Plan of Attack.

8. Relating to the Arrival of the British Fleet at Sandy Hook.

8a. Information respecting certain Tories at Jamaica.

9. Relating to the imprisonment of Loyalists.
10. Benjamin Kissam's Report to Congress on driving off Stock.
11. Letters of Jeromus Remsen relating to the same matter.
12. Capt. Lambert Suydam's report of Loyalists taken Prisoners.
13. Roll of the Troops of Horse in Kings and Queens Counties, on duty in driving off Stock.
14. Depositions and Letters relating to the Loyalists of Long Island.

14a. Address of Congratulation, signed by 1293 inhabitants of Queens Co., to Gov. Tryon on his return to New York, and Tryon's acknowledgment.

Documents relating to the Landing of the British, and of the skirmishes preceding the Battle

15. Major Abner Benedict's Account of the Tornado which preceded the Battle.
16. Col. Samuel J. Atlee's Journal.
17. Burning of Judge Lefferts' House, and Account of the skirmish at Flatbush.
18. Extracts from Letters of Officers in Col. Atlee's Battalion.
19. Washington's Letter to Gen. Putnam concerning Marauding.
20. Gen. Sullivan's Account of the Battle of Valley Grove.
21. Accounts of the Landing of the British, and of the Thunder storm of August 21.
22. Washington's Announcement to Gov. Trumbull of the Landing of the British.

Official Reports and Accounts of the Battle.

23. Admiral Howe's Report of his Operations.
24. Gen. Howe's Official Report.
25. Washington's Letters, announcing his Retreat from Long Island.
26. Col. Smallwood's Account of the Battle, and Loss of the Maryland Battalion.
27. Col. Haslet's Account.
28. Col. Harrison's Letter to the President of Congress.
29. Lord Stirling's Account of his Capture.
30. Col. Reed's Account of the Retreat.
31. Col. James Chambers's Account.
32. Account by a British Officer.
33. Letters from the Maryland Committee of Safety.
34. Extract from the Journal of Lord George Harris.
35. Extract from the Journal of Sir George Collier.
36. Extract from a Letter by an Officer in the Maryland Battalion.
37. Return of the Prisoners taken by the British, and of their own Losses, August 27, 1776.
38. Col. Troup's Account of the Treatment of Prisoners by the British.

Narratives by Historians, and Contemporaneous Accounts.

40. Hessian Account of Events on Long Island.
41. Account by a British Historian.

42. Stedman's Account of the Landing of the British and of the Engagements.
43. Extracts from the Testimony given before a Committee of Parliament by British Officers, and from Letters, Pamphlets, etc.
44. Extract from a Letter from Philadelphia.
45. Extracts from two Letters by Soldiers.
46. Extracts from President Stiles' Diary.

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47. Narrative by Maj. Abraham Leggett.
48. Statement of Hezekiah Munsell.
49. Recollections by an Eye Witness.
50. Extract from the Narrative of James Sullivan Martin.
51. Narrative of the Participation of the Rhode Island Regiment, by Stephen Olney.
52. Account by a Marylander.
53. Extract from a Letter from New York.
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56. Narrative of the Battle by a Soldier.
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LIST AND DESCRIPTION

OF

THE PLANS AND PLATES.

PLAN I.

This plan, the work of a Hessian officer, was drawn shortly after the occurrence of the battle. The manuscript was procured from a gentleman in Brunswick, Germany, who obtained it from a source which guarantees its authenticity. It is now published for the first time. The following is a *translation of the table of description.*

PLAN of the Redoubts and lines which the rebels had erected near Brookland; of others on Redhook and Governor's Island; of their camps occupied by the rebel and English armies after the affair at Flatbush, and that occupied by Gen. DeHeister on the 31st of August, 1776.

A. Camp of the Enemy (i. e. the Americans).
B. Redoubts and lines of the Enemy before Brookland.
C. Part of the Abatis; forest cut down.
D. Redoubt on Redhook.
E. Fort Stirling.
F. Unfinished Redoubt.
G. The Camp occupied by the English Army after the affair of Flatbush.
H. The Camp occupied by General DeHeister on the 31st of August.
J. Batteries established by the English near Rem Remsen's mill, each of two twelve-pound guns and two mortars.
K. Brookland (junction of Gowanus, Flatbush and Jamaica Roads).
L. Brookland Ferry.
M. Bedford.

The topographical outlines of the plan were taken from the Ratzer Map, to which the military details were added at some period subsequent to the battle. It will be observed that the line of American entrenchments as given by the Hessian officer, do not correspond entirely with those upon the plan compiled for this work. On a plan drawn upon a scale so small, but few of the details of the various positions could be given. The general line of fortification is the same in each plan, but in the larger one, the natural defensible line has been followed, as nearly as it could be authenticated by documentary and traditional evidence.

PLAN II.

This plan of the positions of the British and American armies, and the redoubts and lines of fortification, is compiled from the most authentic sources of information available. The routes of the British were generally over country roads long since abandoned and now covered with buildings, but their localities were accurately surveyed by the author before their traces were lost.

PLATE I. SITE OF THE ASSAULT ON THE BATTERY AT THE CORTELYOU HOUSE.

This view covers the site of the last heroic struggle of the Maryland battalion, commanded by Lord Stirling in person. On the extreme left is the Schoonmaker house, in front of which the Gowanus road passes, curving abruptly at the distance of one hundred and fifty yards towards the Cortelyou house, which stood about two hundred yards to the northeast of the angle, on the same road. The salt meadow bordering Gowanus creek and the mill ponds, extended almost to the verge of the road, which curved as represented in the plate, to avoid it. It was doubtless under the protection of the angle in the road and the stone walls bordering it, that the Marylanders rallied so often to protect the retreat of their fugitive countrymen. On the hill bounding the horizon, in the centre of the plate, was situated Fort Putnam, now called Fort Greene.

II. FREEKE'S MILL-POND AND FORT BOX.

View of the Yellow mills, known in later years as Freeke's mills. The point of view is from the high ground near the crossing of First street and Third avenue. It was to this point that the port road led, and curved abruptly to cross the mill dam. The redoubt on the westerly side of the dam occupies a site known as Fort Lawrence or Fort Boerum, having been so styled during the war of 1812. Natural lines of defense are perpetual, and the positions adopted in the latter period, would doubtless represent those of the revolution. In 1812, Gen. Swift, in almost every instance, adopted the lines of Gen. Lee. The Yellow mills were burned by Col. Ward to protect his own retreat, and by this dastardly act the survivors of the Maryland battalion were left to their fate.

III. VIEW OF BLUCKIE'S BARRACKS.

Bluckie's Barracks was a knoll around which the Gowanus road curved near the house of Wynant Bennet at the foot of 24th street. The road in view, at the extreme right of the picture, is in the vicinity of 20th street

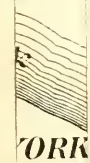
and Third avenue. The creek and swampy intervale extending across the centre of the view, almost shut off access to the knoll on the land-side, except by the bridge near the house, and a narrow causeway on the south.

IV. NEW UTRECHT CHURCH AND DE SILLE HOUSE.

The view of the church is taken from an original drawing by Benj. J. Lossing, Esq., in the possession of Henry Onderdonk, Jr., of Jamaica. The DeSille house is also copied from a drawing belonging to the Long Island Historical Society. The relative position of the two edifices is established by a topographical plan of their sites, made by Mr. Teunis G. Bergen, of New Utrecht. It was to the house on the left, built in 1658 by Nicasius DeSille, that the dying Gen. Woodhull was brought, nearly ten days after the battle, and here he expired. The quaint Dutch church was at the same time crowded with American prisoners.

V. REDOUBT ON PONKIESBERG.

View of redoubt on Ponkiesberg — the Dutch name. This knoll was about sixty feet higher than the present grade of the site, and so steep on three sides as to make the ascent attended with some difficulty. It was known as Cobble Hill in latter years, and in 1812 a redoubt was constructed upon it known as Fort Swift.



BAY OF
NEW YORK

PLAN OF THE
POSITIONS AND MOVEMENTS
OF THE
BRITISH AND AMERICAN ARMY
on the 26th & 27th of AUGUST 1776
ON
LONG ISLAND
WITH PROJECTIONS OF THE
MODERN STREETS
Prepared by T.W. Field
Brooklyn, 1869.
Town of New Lots, the modern Village of East New York
(Note Flatlands and this road have been brought into the map, though several miles from the lines of Brooklyn)
Jamaica & Flatlands Road
Route of Flanking Division Commanded by Howe, Percy, Clinton & Cornwallis
FLATLANDS
Ridge of low wooded hills
Route of Main Flanking Division
Route of British Column from Jamaica
Position of Hessians under Gen de Heister
FLATBUSH
Am Redoubt
Abandoned on the 27th Aug.
Col Rahl's Standard on the Road
Low wooded hills
Gen. Stirlings Line
Gen. Sullivan
Position
Route of the Corps of Cornwallis
Redoubt
The Main Division of British Army on the 27th
Jamaica and Flatbush Road
Flatbush Road
Flatbush Av
New York Avenue
Clove Road
Perry Avenue
Old Jamaica Road
Myrtle Av
Fulton Av
Bedford Av
Myrtle Avenue
Bushwick Lane
New Lots Turnpike
Bushwick Creek
Bushwick Road
Grand Street
North Second Street
Broadway
Kruppte Kush Road
Bedford Avenue
Washington Avenue
Redoubt constructed by British Army 26th
Fort Putnam
Fort Greene
Fort Box
Fort Stirling
Wallabout Bay
Wallabout Creek
Wallabout
Bridge St
Fulton St
Navy St
Clinton St
Red Hook Lane
Hamilton Avenue
Red Hook
Fort Defiance
Gowanus Bay
Gowanus Creek
Gowanus Road
Third St
Fourth St
Eighth St
Sixth Ave
Prospect Park
Old Fort Greene
Old Office of Sheriff
Stirlings Division Retreated
Burial Ground
Powder Mill
Pierrepont
Pierrepont Street
Atlantic Basin
Red Hook
Buttermilk Channel
Governors Is
Gowanus Bay
Bay of New York
East River
Coriciens Hook
City of New York
Newtown Creek
Ferry to Fulton Ferry
Ferry to Catherine Ferry
Ferry to Whitehall
Ferry to Wall St
Ferry to Old Slip
Ferry to Peck Slip
Ferry to Corlears Hook
Ferry to Grand St
Ferry to Roosevelt St
Ferry to Houston St
Ferry to Fifth St
Ferry to Twenty Third St
Ferry to Thirty Fourth St
Ferry to Forty Second St
Ferry to Hunters Point
Ferry to Astoria
Ferry to Flushing
Ferry to College Point
Ferry to Whitestone
Ferry to Throgs Neck
Ferry to Pelham
Ferry to Port Morris
Ferry to Hell Gate
Ferry to Ravenswood
Ferry to Blackwells Is
Ferry to Randalls Is
Ferry to Wards Is
Ferry to Astoria
Ferry to Hallets Point
Ferry to Long Island City
Ferry to Greenpoint
Ferry to Williamsburg
Ferry to Grand St
Ferry to Roosevelt St
Ferry to Houston St
Ferry to Fifth St
Ferry to Twenty Third St
Ferry to Thirty Fourth St
Ferry to Forty Second St
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